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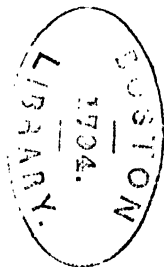
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JAMES GORDON'S WIFE.

"We are at school: through this strange life of ours,
We pass, like children through their teaching-time;
Training in lowly trust our highest powers,
Learning by common things truths most sublime."



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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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JAMES GORDON'S WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

Silence, beautiful voice !

Still ! I will hear you no more.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

“**M**R. GORDON, my lady.”
Lady Louisa rose from the depths
of an ancient sofa.

“How do you do, Mr. Gordon ? I am
glad to see you. In fact, you are just the
person whom I wished to see. Pray sit
down.”

“I ventured to call—” said James, “I
was passing through Lorton ; and I thought
that I might as well bring a letter which

came by this morning's post, for my cousin—for Miss Wynn."

"How excessively kind!" said Lady Louisa: "Gabrielle will be so much obliged to you. I will take charge of the letter; she is out, just now, with my children and Mr. Godfrey. They are not likely to return at present: can you spare me a few moments? it would be such an excellent opportunity to discuss one all-important subject. You must not think me interfering. If you are her guardian, I am his aunt, you see."

"May I ask to whom you are alluding?" said James, stiffly.

His manner alarmed Lady Louisa.

"Forgive me, Mr. Gordon. Bear with me. I know I am tiresome. I am usually tiresome: to myself and to every one else. Will you allow me to trouble you for that fan?"

James handed her the fan, which lay on

a small table at his elbow. Then he sat still, and waited: externally very *nonchalant*, very calm, very cold—inwardly all commotion, each moment an agony of suspense.

Lady Louisa fanned herself for a considerable time, with every symptom of exhaustion. She then removed a refractory stopper from a scent-bottle; and inhaled strong odours. Finally, she replaced the stopper, smoothed the flaxen ringlets, folded her fat white hands in her lap, over an embroidered pocket-handkerchief, and brought her eyes to bear upon James's face.

"Mr. Gordon," she said, in a solemn tone: "You appear to be unacquainted with a circumstance, which—holding, as you do, the responsible position of Gabrielle's guardian—I think it my duty to lay before you. Young girls are by nature reticent and shrinking; Gabrielle is peculiarly so. Any way, we could scarcely expect her to

make a *confidant* of you : who are—forgive me—in appearance, at least, so young yourself. But a mother, Mr. Gordon ; and a widowed mother : who has experienced all : she may be regarded as a safe *confidante*, and as a competent judge, in such matters. Surely, my dear Mr. Gordon, you agree with me?”

“ I should agree with you, no doubt, Lady Louisa, if I had any idea to what matters you were referring.”

“ My dear Mr. Gordon, how can you ask ? I refer to *les affaires du cœur*. You, being—as I observed—young, understand them, doubtless, as none, save the young—and widowed hearts whose chief comfort consists in the recollection of youth—are able to understand them. Mr. Gordon, am I not right ?”—and again, with a gentle smile, she smoothed the flaxen ringlets.

“ I really know nothing about it,” said James, frigidly.

"Ah! your time is yet to come, then. But I am forgetting my subject. You may have heard Gabrielle mention my nephew, Charles Godfrey?"

"I had the honour of meeting him last year, at Eversfield," said James, clenching his hand.

"Ah! no doubt. He loves Eversfield. His tenderest associations are connected with it. But, Mr. Gordon, there is one whom he loves better than Eversfield: better than the whole world besides. And that one is—cannot you guess?"

"I must beg to be excused," said James, more frigidly than ever.

"That one is your dear ward—Gabrielle. In words, he has not, as yet, told her his secret. He is too honourable to speak before he can offer her a home. But she understands him; clearly, thoroughly: and she is happy. They trust one another. It

is beautiful, really beautiful, to see them together!"

"Indeed?" said James.

Lady Louisa was disappointed. She had expected to find him deeply interested, sweetly sympathizing: a Werther or a Lindorff. But here he sat, unmoved; an unimpressible young man of the nineteenth century.

"I trust that you will erect no obstacles, Mr. Gordon," she resumed, closing her eyes, with a sigh: "I felt it a solemn duty to enlighten you; but I shall never forgive myself, if you throw cold water upon their hopes. It is dangerous to oppose the stream of Love. Its current——"

James could stand this no longer. He took up his hat.

"I am much obliged to you, Lady Louisa. Should your conjectures be founded on fact——"

"Founded on fact!" cried Lady Louisa, startled from her languor; and the flaxen ringlets appeared to stiffen, as with horror: "Founded on fact! There is no doubt whatever! I——"

"Mistakes of that nature—or of any nature—are not uncommon. Time will prove. For the present, we can't do better, I think, than leave things to take their course. I must ask you to excuse me, now. I am pressed for time. You will kindly deliver the letter? Good morning!"

"Good morning," repeated Lady Louisa, quite overpowered. James bowed himself out, and she sank breathless on her sofa.

"A hard, cold, young man! Poor Gabrielle! Many must be her trials! His extreme sharpness!—how can her sensitive nature sustain it? He has made me feel quite faint. I must ring for some red lavender; or my nerves will give way."

"Sickly, sentimental fool!" muttered James, as he set spurs to his horse: "I shall give Gabrielle a hint not to accept her invitations too often. She's enough to poison any girl's mind. Does Gabrielle make a *confidante* of her, I wonder? I don't believe it. Gabrielle has more sense. 'Tis all her confounded imagination. What business has she to palm her fancies on me,—as though they were truth?"

Then James began to ponder those fancies. And, as he pondered, he felt that, however much he might dislike Lady Louisa, he disliked Charlie Godfrey more. In fact, that he hated Charlie Godfrey; that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to hear that the very name was blotted out from the face of the earth.

He galloped faster and faster; on and on; regardless of heat, of dust, of passers-by. Far away from Farnley, far beyond Lorton:

until, as he neared the moors, the ever-steepening ground compelled him to slacken his pace. He then saw, for the first time, that his horse was thoroughly exhausted. The poor creature's sides were streaming, his lungs heaving, every inch of spirit gone from him. James, full of compunction, dismounted; and led him some paces onward, to a small inn, which stood by the wayside. The bench at the door was occupied by a party of navvies; whom the landlord's little daughter was in the act of supplying with pipes, and mugs of beer. As James approached, she paused; and every eye was turned in the direction of the horse.

"Sithee, Bill! He's loike to drop," exclaimed one of the men.

"He is indeed," said James; "Just call the ostler, will you? I must get him to the stable."

"Poor Yarrow—poor old fellow," he

murmured, bending over the horse's neck :
"Do you wonder what possessed your master?
I'm sure he wonders the same."

"Eh, but he is blown ! Has he been a boltin' wi' ya, sir ?" inquired the ostler ; to whom James was a stranger.

"No," said James, shortly : "He is knocked up, though, as you perceive. I must leave him here ; and a servant will call for him to-morrow."

"It's a sin and a shame," muttered the ostler, as he led Yarrow away—"a sin and a shame, ta roide a poor beast ta death, a this how. He wouldn't fancy it, hissen, o reckon !"

A quarter of an hour later, however, James appeared in the stable ; carefully inspected the accommodations ; anxiously examined the horse ; gave minute orders for his comfort ; and tipped the ostler. That worthy person then softened ; and subse-

quently informed the navvies, that t' hoss *had* been a boltin', and t' Mester wor too high to own it. An' who could blame him?

Meanwhile, James had started upon his long homeward walk. The sun was setting when he reached Farnley; dinner was nearly over. He looked into the dining-room—gave some brief explanation—ran upstairs, three steps at a time—dressed hurriedly, and ran down again. His social duties should not suffer for the turmoil of his mind. He made himself agreeable to his future brother-in-law, and to Mr. Morris, who was also present; submitted to a long catechism from Cissy, concerning Gabrielle, Charlie Godfrey, and Lorton; advised Olivia upon some doubtful point in the family arrangements; asked Marian to sing, and listened with apparent interest, while she did so: finally, after the ladies had retired,

smoked a cigar upon the terrace with the Admiral.

But right thankful was he, when the Admiral retired also, and when all was still for the night. He allowed Wilcox to fasten the bolts and bars, and to follow the rest of the world to bed. Then he went into the chapel, and let himself out again, through a door which opened upon the park. And he would not, he was resolved, return, until he had faced the worst ; until he had penetrated the recesses of that mystery, his own heart ; and had formed his resolutions for the future.

Among a clump of Scotch firs, stood an old-fashioned sun-dial, surrounded by three mossy steps. Here, towards midnight, James sat ; prepared for the battle.

Long had that battle been warded off ; long had he shrunk from any shadow of parting with the sweet visions which might—nay, would—be shattered in the fray.

But shrinking was over now. The time was come. He must lay his self-deceptions by, for ever and for ever.

First, then, a rigid self-analyzation : into the thick of which he boldly plunged.

Why—this was a leading question—why did the bare mention of one unimportant name, arouse in his breast, passions so stormy, so painful? Why did he hate Charlie Godfrey?

Not easily was this aspiring young philosopher brought to confess a weakness which he had hitherto imagined to have no part in his nature ; or to be, at any rate, completely under his control. But he had undertaken the task of searching out the truth ; and he would carry it through. He was jealous of Charlie Godfrey.

And why? Could that simple youth in any way bear comparison with himself? Could that boy so much as pretend to rival

the author of the "Four Essays," in ambition in intellect, in genius? No—it was nothing of this. All that excited such bitter, such burning envy, was the place which Charlie Godfrey occupied—or might, in the future occupy—in the insignificant affections of an insignificant girl. That was all! Nothing grander. Nothing more worthy to set a philosopher's heart on fire.

And why did James thus value Gabrielle's favour?—He paused—looking up into the sky. All there was calm, still, pure. Myriads of stars fixed on him their passionless eyes: censuring, so it seemed, his agitation. He turned to earth again; and his gaze encountered the trees: the grand trees which generations long dead had seen, much as he saw them now. Stately—self-contained—firm—they also reproached him. "Shall all Nature be so serene, so unmoved?" he thought,—
"and I swayed by a breath?"

Had he not, years ago, resolved that no inferior aims should actuate his mind? that he would pitch his standard on the mountain top, on the highest height of all? that matters which to other men were life or death, he would despise—soaring beyond? Why then—to repeat his question— did he thus value the favour of a girl?

Because he loved her.

Because a place in his soul, a place of which he himself had been ignorant, she had found, and filled.

Because glory, and honour, and power, and knowledge, and philosophy, and life, and death, were to him all as nothing in comparison with her; in comparison with her love.

This, then, it was, which had disturbed him of late; which had drawn off his attention from higher things; which had robbed his favourite studies of their zest; which

had placed his peace of mind at the mercy of a smile or a frown ; which had led him to rest satisfied with present enjoyment, instead of aiming at future greatness ; which had, in fact, transformed his whole nature.

This that he had scorned. This that turned men into idolaters, and women into fools. That, since the creation of the world, had been bound up with almost everything bad, or contemptible, or unfortunate, done or suffered,—had ruined souls and bodies,—had blinded judgments,—had broken hearts : had, in short, worked mischief, irreparable. This it was that had taken possession of him. Even Love.

Yes. Even Love. But how ? determined as he had been against it. What had ensnared him, contrary to his will ? Not beauty. Deep as was his humiliation, he raised his head proudly, as he thought, that, at any rate, one, the most common, degrada-

tion, was spared him! Gabrielle had a sweet face, a taking face; but she had none of that dangerous, irresistible loveliness.

Was it intellect? No—her abilities were above the average; but that was not her charm in his eyes. He might admire, he could never love, a woman for her intellect. It was something indescribable, something unfathomable. He had known hundreds of girls, in his day; brilliant girls, graceful girls, pretty girls. Their society had refreshed him; he had felt secretly flattered by the consciousness that almost any one of them he might win, did he care to win her, for his own.

But he never had so cared. Never till he knew Gabrielle.

Well! it was useless to probe further into causes and motives. The mischief was done. How could it be repaired?—How indeed? James had imagined himself to be cool by

nature ; he now discovered his mistake. He felt, at this moment, that, if he gave up Gabrielle, he must give up happiness for ever ! But, after all, was happiness necessary ? Was there not something grander, more divine, than happiness ? Something which still might lie within his reach, though Gabrielle were far removed ? It was better, he told himself—ininitely better—to be great, than to be happy.

Yet his weaker nature recoiled. Before him rose a vision of life with Gabrielle ; of what it would be to have her always with him, to have her for his own, to know that she loved him, as he—God help him ! loved her. But . . . where, in such a life, would ambition be ? where the purposes of former days ? How, in a home so radiant, so Eden-like, could he do otherwise than rest, as other men rested—the calm, domestic circle hemming him in, the wider range shut out ?

Then James remembered a sentence, which he had read long ago ; and which said, that to be great in thought and in action, a man must suffer greatly. Should he shrink from suffering, if such were its results? Should he not rather meet it and be strong, as others had been before him ?

He left his seat on the old mossy steps, and roved further into the park. He walked to and fro, like a restless spirit, battling with himself. This was a conflict—so it seemed to him—between his higher and his lower nature. This night, so he believed, would determine the relative position of each.

Three hours that conflict raged ; at last, it wore itself out. James returned to the sun-dial, and sat down, as before, upon the steps. By this time, he was thoroughly tired ; his head ached ; his bodily strength seemed almost spent. But, although he had made up his mind, he had still to form

certain definite resolutions. He set wearily to work once more.

First, he would avoid Gabrielle. He would terminate those dangerous organ-lessons; he would no longer invite her to twilight walks, to *tête-à-tête* rides or drives. All that—and with it, all the sweetness of his existence—must come to an end.

Secondly, lest his firmness, unaided, should give way beneath the storms of ungovernable feeling, he would make it a duty to forget her; he would marry some one else. Some one whom he should not be tempted to love too well; the charms of whose society would not absorb him, or entangle him in the blinding web of fascination: yet to whom, irrevocably bound, he should be compelled, by every highest principle, to cleave—forsaking all other—so long as they both should live. Then, to think of Gabrielle would be sin; and to sin,

sin so positive, so gross, he was surely in no danger of stooping. To mere weakness, alas ! he had already stooped ; and might so stoop again.

Once, three months before, at the May school feast, as he sat on the village green, with Gabrielle, and watched the children play, the possibility of that which was now come upon him—the possibility that he might one day fall in love—had occurred to his mind. He had not known why it thus occurred ; but thus it had been ; and then, as now, he had determined that his best defence would be to raise an impassable barrier between himself and the enemy, in the form of marriage—marriage, not with the person whom he loved, but with a person whom he did not love. He had even pondered the advisability of taking this measure beforehand ; of anticipating the attack, by marrying while yet—as he be-

lieved—his heart was free. And he had thought of Theodosia Featherstone as, in such a case, a suitable wife.

The was not romantic; she would not expect from him any too romantic devotion; she would not fret, much less break her heart, if he were cool or careless. She wanted only money and a good position; and these he could bestow. She would look well at the head of his table; she would entertain his visitors; she would be a shrewd and practical mistress of his household. And he saw that she was quite at his disposal. For a time, indeed, he had suspected an obstacle in the person of Lord Joseph Postlethwaite. But he had recently met both Lord Joseph and The in London; and he now felt convinced that his suspicions on this score, had been groundless.

So again, as on that May afternoon, he thought of Theodosia Featherstone.

She was expected to arrive at Farnley the following day. He would at once begin to pay her particular attention. As soon as possible, he would engage himself; then, pledged in honour, he should feel safe. But how had he fallen from his former height, since external bonds, like these, were requisite to enforce the once all-potent bonds of his own will !

And Gabrielle? What would she think of all this? For one moment, he faltered. But only for one moment. She could not love him—yet: he would not pause to examine this assertion: Charles Godfrey was doing his best to win her heart, and soon, doubtless, he would succeed. Perhaps, indeed, he had succeeded already. He should come to Farnley; he should have every opportunity. Yes—down, wild demon! he should. Not one finger would James stir to hinder it.

His resolutions were complete: to be carried out at all hazards. A thrill of stern triumph shot through James's heart, as he thought how fiercely would he avenged on themselves, his weakness and his blindness. And yet——he was surely exhausted no less in mind than in body; or he could not, even in solitude, so lose his self-control——yet, in that very moment, his head sank on his hands, and heavy sobs convulsed his whole frame. Who would recognize the imperturbable James Gordon, now?

The outburst refreshed him. Ere long, he raised his head; dashed away, in indignation, the unmanly tears; pushed the dark mass of hair from his fevered forehead: and rested. The summer dawn was breaking in the east. The birds had begun to twitter, and the cows to low. For the present, the storm was over, succeeded by a stagnant calm: he could not think or reason, any

more. He rose; returned to the house—entering, as he had gone, through the chapel; wearily mounted the stairs, and took refuge in his own room. There, throwing himself upon the bed, a few brief moments saw him lost in a dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER II.

She dreams on him, that has forgot her love ;
 You dote on her that cares not for your love,
 'Tis pity, love should be so contrary !

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

“GABRIELLE,” said Charlie Godfrey,
 “I hardly like to ask; but you used
 to tell me everything, and——Is it true that
 you are engaged to Mr. Gordon?”

“Is it true, Charlie? What can you
 mean?” cried Gabrielle, instantly crimson.

“Never mind. Don’t answer me, unless
 you wish. Only it did seem a little queer
 when I heard the report, that you should
 be engaged, and say nothing to me.”

“Heard the report, Charlie? What re-
 port? It is entirely false, at any rate. I

am not engaged—or likely to be engaged. You have been to see Mr. Morris. Was it he who——”

“He said nothing that you need mind. At least, he merely said that he had been told you were engaged to Mr. Gordon. Such things will get about, you know. Why, Gabrielle——!”

For she had burst into a passion of tears.

“Oh, Charlie! what shall I do? What will James think? I can't bear even the idea of his hearing it! What shall I do, Charlie?”

“You can do nothing, my dear Gabrielle. The probability is, that Gordon will not hear it: if he should, he would pay it no attention. It is the kind of thing that would go in at one ear, and out at the other, with him.”

But Gabrielle sobbed on.

“I wish I'd held my tongue!” said Char-

lie, sighing: "How is it that you take things so to heart, Gabrielle? How will you ever get through the world?"

"I can't help it, Charlie. I should'n't care, if it were any one else. But James—!"

There was no mistaking the tone in which that "But James—" was uttered. Charlie looked blankly away, out of the window, seeing nothing.

"Charlie," she said, raising her eyes, at length: "If you hear such a report again, do contradict it. Say that it is not true; and say so very positively. Will you promise?"

"Yes, I will promise."

He took her hand, as though she had been a child who required to be soothed.

"And I'll tell you what: I'll go over and get Mr. Morris to quash the report altogether. I daresay he can. But don' cry any more. I feel wretched, when I see you cry."

"Never mind, dear Charlie. It is only my silliness," said Gabrielle, and submitted herself to the soothing; thinking how happy she was to possess a friend so good and so kind, and to be on such pleasant terms with him—that tiresome love, *par excellence*, out of the question.

But Charlie, meanwhile, was sick at heart. He could hardly remember a time when he had not, as a matter of course, looked forward to spending his life with Gabrielle; when he had not regarded her as his own especial property: his wife in prospective. She had filled to him the place of sister, friend, mother; she had been, she was now, by far the most precious thing in his world; and until very recently the poor fellow had never doubted but that he was the most precious thing in hers.

During the last few days, however, his

own observations had convinced him of his mistake. Not that he perfectly comprehended the position of affairs ; but he saw that, already, James Gordon was to Gabrielle something that he had never been to her—even at Eversfield. It was a terrible blow. Charlie, at first, was almost stunned by it. He walked about, feeling as though he were in a dream ; a dream of horror and of darkness : and longed to awake. But, by this time, he had so far recollected himself as to determine, that, come what might upon him, he must face it like a man ; that he must “be up and doing,” with a heart for any fate ; and, so far as possible, supply the part of a brother to Gabrielle.

Some such guard, she, so sensitive, so unsophisticated, required ; he was by no means sure that young Gordon had not been playing fast and loose with her. He would at least watch over her ; he would at least

let her know that, whoever else might fail her, she had a friend in him.

And this resolution formed, peace, if no more, revived. He felt himself strong to suffer.

The day on which Gabrielle returned to Farnley, was still and sultry. The air was full of droning insects: the sky of heat-clouds. The carriage—not the pony carriage, this time—was sent to fetch her; and she had a solitary drive. As she entered the park gates, something started, suddenly, from beneath a tree, something very fresh and cool and pretty, in a fluttering muslin dress and a shady hat. It signed to the coachman to stop; then danced to the carriage door.

“Gabrielle!” with a sweeping curtsey—
“Your humble servant!”

“Oh, Cissy! I am so glad to see you. Do get in, and drive with me to the house.”

"No, that won't suit me at all at all. You must get out, and walk with me away from the house. I know a place where we can hide; I'm so sick of the people. Such swarms! and the gentlemen are out shooting, and there's only womankind at home. They've got Olivia with them, and Marian, and Annie too; and they don't want us a bit. Come along."

She opened the door, and made a feint of dragging Gabrielle forth. Whereupon Gabrielle jumped forth; and the coachman was ordered to drive on. Cissy drew her cousin's arm within her own; and led her away, under the trees.

"Here, behind this bush, is my hiding-place. We'll sit down, and be cozy. And now let me relieve my mind by describing these tiresome people. First, there's Mrs. Featherstone, with her sharp little eyes. I advise you to keep clear of them, Gabrielle.

I'm a nether millstone ; she may slander me all day, and I shall be just as happy. But you're made of different stuff."

"Yes, I remember those eyes. They frightened me directly I saw them."

"My dear Gabrielle, fear nothing and nobody. Brass is the coin for this world. Though, if you must be a coward, there's a further object of terror !

'I know a maiden'—(she's at Farnley now)—'fair to see ;

Beware !

She can both false and friendly be—

Take care !

Her surname's Featherstone, and her Christian name's The—

So There !

I hope you appreciate my poetic talent, Gabrielle. But, seriously, never strike up a friendship with that most unpleasant little article, or you'll repent it. Not, indeed, that you'll have the opportunity ! James is her friend in this family, and she's very faithful to him : sticks like a leech—(Poetical again ! Pardon my flights.) They flirt

sweetly, 'from morn to dewy eve.' I say this, that you may be prepared to see James make himself ridiculous; which you inevitably will see, to-night. But it's one thing to flirt, and another to woo: High diddle diddle; boo, boo, boo. I really can't help lisping in numbers—the numbers come so! Gipsy, sit still, dear, while I fix your daisy chain—as Ellen Montgomery would say."

"What other people are there, Cissy?"

"Why, there's Captain Featherstone and his bride: alias, Cupid and Mammon. There's Miss Brown, a spinster authoress—a something between indigo and ultramarine. There's——"

"Hush, Cissy. I'll hear no more," said Gabrielle, laughing: "You are a naughty, satirical girl; and we mustn't break the ninth commandment: so be quiet."

"Well, dear—I bow to your scruples. As for me, you know, I haven't any. You'd

better accept that, at once, as a fact ; or I shall shock you continually. By-the-by, Marian's wedding is fixed for October. She means to go with the Admiral to the Mediterranean."

"How you will miss her !"

"I suppose I shall. I'm not sure, though, now that I have you. Don't give me up, Gabrielle—but I'm sadly wanting in natural affection. I've got no soul ; and, in consequence, no heart."

"Cissy !"

"Not a morsel, dear ; and I'm glad. Hearts are mischief-making things : at the root of all the misery in the world."

"And all that misery, sooner than be without a heart, I would bear," cried Gabrielle.

"Ah ! because people always admire what they happen to possess themselves. But I, who am an impartial looker-on, can see the

rights of the case. Why, you, for instance —if you had a disappointment: you are just one of the sort to say nothing and die of ‘a waste’: like that wretched Mary Jones, who was buried this morning.”

“What disappointment had Mary Jones?”

“None that I know. But she died of a ‘waste.’ I saw her last week. Ugh! So thin and ghastly!”

Cissy shuddered.

“And many a girl has looked so, and died so, just through having a heart! Far better be like The Featherstone and me!”

“But very few people really die of a broken heart.”

“No; they have to ‘grin and bear it’: that’s even worse. But we’ll talk of such things no more. ‘Live whilst you live, the epicure would say.’ In my opinion, that epicure was a person to be encouraged.”

Gabrielle was silent. She sat looking

into the far distance. After a pause—during which Cissy had become absorbed in a second daisy chain—

“I think,” she said, “that if this life were all, and this world all, we might, perhaps, be better off without hearts, or with smaller ones. But, as it is, they are very useful.”

“That’s rather a new view to take of the matter! Please explain yourself, Miss Utilitarian.”

“I was thinking of something Mr. Morris once said—that this world is only a school.”

“Well?”

“Well! we want sorrow to make us realize that; and sorrow comes through the heart, you know.”

“My dear, sorrow is an anomaly. It has crept into the universe by mistake, and it ought to creep out again. You are touching on subjects which I feel myself in duty bound to avoid. I never, when I can help

it, remember that I must die, or suffer, or anything unpleasant of the kind. And as to realizing that this world is a school—let us, and welcome: a Do-the-boys Hall, if you like! But will realizing it mend it?”

“It will teach us to think of the world to come as our home,” said Gabrielle, with a sigh, caused, perhaps, by some secret foreboding.

Cissy laughed, and threw her daisy chain over her cousin's head.

“There, look at that, and leave your metaphysics alone. I'm not in a mood for them. Gabrielle, what a cough! Has the waste begun already?”

“I hope not,” said Gabrielle, laughing; “We were out in a shower, yesterday evening; and I caught cold.”

“Well! I hope nothing worse may follow. There's a shot! If I might only go out shooting! I asked James to let me; but he wouldn't.”

"Is James a good shot?"

"I shan't tell you. I hate to say anything in his praise : he's always so dreadfully successful. Gabrielle, promise, for my sake, to refuse him, if he should give you a chance."

"You had better make that request to Miss Featherstone," replied Gabrielle. But her heart sickened as she spoke.

Miss Featherstone herself, lovely as ever, was standing with Marian on the steps, when, an hour later, Cissy and Gabrielle came within sight of the hall door. The gentlemen were just returned ; and James, looking peculiarly handsome in his shooting-coat and knickerbockers, a bag of grouse slung across his shoulders, and a gun in his hand, stood at the foot of the steps, answering questions, and flirting—or appearances deceived—with The.

"Oh, Mr. Gordon! do keep your gun still! I'm sure it will go off and shoot me."

"And I am sure that—even were it, which it isn't, loaded—my gun would never do so!"

"Oh, of course. Your gun is perfect, be others what they may! Here comes Cissy; and who is with her? Miss Wynn?"

"Yes; Gabrielle. I thought she was at Lorton," said Marian gently.

James, who had been standing with his back to the park, looked round. A change passed over his face: a momentary quiver. He saw her slowly approaching, by Cissy's side, and felt that everything he most valued in existence—save his ambition—was centred in that girlish form.

"If she were my wife," he said in his heart, "I should make her my all in all. How could I help it? No woman must ever be that."

"How do you do, Gabrielle?" He took her hand, and, with one cool clasp, relinquished it. "When did you return?"

Gabrielle answered shortly; and passed on. Her sensitive ear had at once discerned the indifference of his tone and manner. Leaving Cissy to tease him and provoke The, she went into the house.

He turned again to Miss Featherstone; but, somehow, he could not resume his former lightness. One or two vain attempts he made; then gave it up: and departed with his gun.

* * * * *

The influx of visitors had wrought a marvellous change in Farnley. Voices and footsteps resounded through the silent corridors; strange servants were encountered on the stairs; strange faces in the hall. It was seldom that Gabrielle devoted an unnecessary minute to her glass; but, on this evening, she did linger some time after her toilette was completed, looking wistfully at herself, and thinking of Miss Featherstone:

how very beautiful Miss Featherstone was, how natural it seemed that she should captivate James, that he should love her as only beautiful women—so, just then, Gabrielle's morbid imagination whispered—could expect to be loved. If only *she* were beautiful—or even pretty! For Gabrielle's estimate of her own looks was humble in the extreme. And yet an impartial observer would have said that she had little need to complain; that, in some eyes, she was even more attractive, if less striking, than the Bijou herself. She wore white tulle to-night—soft and flowing; with a black sash, jet ornaments, and jessamine in her hair. It was a becoming dress; and then her complexion was so fair, her figure was so slight, and—best of all—her face was so true, so pure, so good! Moreover, that indefinable grace of movement and of manner, which many struggle to acquire by art, but which

Gabrielle possessed by nature, was in itself a beauty ; and a beauty that could not pall. She did not, however—to murder a quotation—“see hersel’ as others saw her.” She turned from the mirror, with a sigh.

“After all, how silly and vain I am,” she thought, “to care so much about my looks ! And of course a plain girl may be as useful as a pretty one. Only——”

She smothered a second sigh : and ran downstairs. The saloon, a beautiful room, extending half the length of the house, was now, for the first time since her arrival at Farnley, thrown open, and used in the evening. Gabrielle had never before seen any room half so splendid. The ceiling carved, gilded, and painted ; the walls panelled with frescoes from Munich and from Rome ; the tables rich in beautiful books and knick-nacks ; an imposing row of windows, each divided from its neighbour

by a curtained recess, containing a marble statue or bust : the whole ending in a vista of conservatory, where a variety of the most exquisite shrubs and flowers, English and exotic, were collected. In Gabrielle's unsophisticated eyes, no ornament, no luxury, was wanting. And the people, she thought, suited the place. At first sight, there appeared to be quite a galaxy of beautiful ladies ! A nearer inspection proved that, as a rule, these ladies were not beautiful : the majority, indeed, bereft of maids and gay attire, would probably have been plain. But, at present, they made a goodly show ; and the gentlemen hovered about them ; chatting, paying compliments, doing all that gentlemen are expected to do on such occasions. Gabrielle, somewhat in the shade, looked from group to group, and made her mental comments. On a sofa, close by, sat her cousin Annie, Lady Peers : with an-

other young matron. They were evidently comparing notes upon some deeply interesting topic. Gabrielle caught a few words.

"No ; Flossy got through them very well. Dr. Williams thought——"

"Indeed? Johnny was quite covered with the rash, and——"

"Yes ; Flossy's A.B.C. is a great trial. What do you think of —— ? "

"Mrs. Barbauld's hymns are the thing. Johnny says——"

Etc. Etc. Etc. Gabrielle turned elsewhere. Her motherly time was to come.

There, in the distance, is Olivia : shewing photographs to two shy young ladies. Dear, good Olivia ! always occupied for others. Cissy is the centre of a circle of gentlemen : which circle and which centre are at present receiving very close attention from Mrs. Featherstone's sharp little eyes. Cissy, seeing this, rattles wildly on ; thinks of all the

most shocking things she can say, and says them ; launches satire, right and left ; and otherwise misconducts herself. But her voice and her laughter are always low ; and her manner is always refined. However careless Cissy may be, she never forgets that she is a lady.

Who are those, in the corner near the conservatory ? The handsome young man who towers above his neighbours' heads—the beautiful little fairy whose robes of blue are rivalled by her eyes ? Gabrielle's gaze is rivetted on this couple ; she cannot look away. They are absorbed in conversation : he standing, leaning against the wall ; she seated, sometimes glancing up at him, sometimes bending, as in pretty confusion, over her fan. His cheek is slightly flushed ; his eyes shine. “ How happy she must be ! ” thinks Gabrielle.

The gong sounds ; the people rise ; there

is a flutter and a dispersion. They pair off. A fashionable-looking young man, with a black moustache and a small head, approaches Gabrielle, bows, and offers his arm. She lays the tip of her white glove upon his very fashionable sleeve, and they follow in the train. On the threshold, he remarks that the weather is sultry. She agrees; her thoughts far on before: where James, with a corpulent countess, heads the procession.

They reach the dining-room; the table is a glitter of glass and plate, with flowers, beautifully arranged. James is already in his place; and the corpulent countess has subsided into a chair at his right hand. A distant voice says something which is supposed to be grace; everybody sits down; the servants rush to and fro; the room resounds with the inquiry, "White soup or mulligatawney?" The fashionable

young man begins to talk about music. How does Gabrielle like Sims Reeves? He is exceedingly astonished to find that she has never heard Sims Reeves. She wishes the fashionable young man would hold his tongue. James, with a smile, is bending forward to make some observation to Miss Featherstone; and Gabrielle wants to catch it. Instead, she catches his eye, and feels herself blush. She exerts herself, tries to talk and laugh; he shall not see that she is out of spirits. The fashionable young man is evidently charmed. She catches James's eye again; he looks a little pained. She wonders why, but does not stop to consider.

The fashionable young man continues to converse. He speaks slowly, and he minces his words. Neither are the words themselves remarkably worth hearing; but Gabrielle takes pains to keep up the conversation. It is joined in by her other neighbour;

he is sensible and well-informed, and adds to it fresh zest. In the intervals, she looks up at grim Gordons of old, who survey her from the walls. She wonders whether that cavalier, with ringlets and a sword, ever sat where James is sitting, and admired some Miss Featherstone of his day; whether that lady with a pyramid of powdered hair, ever endured what she is enduring now,—ever struggled through this restlessness of jealousy, —hating, yet powerless to subdue it. Well! if it were so, what matter? It had long been over. Their love, and their jealousy, and their hatred—all were gone. “One generation goeth, and another cometh.” Gabrielle glances round the table, sees gaiety, beauty, fine dresses, smiling faces, and feels that all is a dream. That all life is a dream; she, and those about her, “such stuff as dreams are made of.”

At length Olivia rises. James opens the

door. Gabrielle does not look at him ; Miss Featherstone does ; and makes some gay remark, which he answers in a similar tone. Cissy shakes her fist at him, and frowns. Cissy is exceedingly angry with James, just now. In the drawing-room, Olivia introduces Gabrielle to the shy young ladies. They are the daughters of a "poor parson," James's distant cousin. Shy indeed they are, innocent of "manner," painfully conscious and ill at ease. Gabrielle, ever quick in sympathy, is sorry for them, speaks to them pleasantly. Olivia passes on ; and they are left in her sole charge.

She draws them out ; not by direct endeavour, but by the interest with which she listens to their timid remarks. They become quite confidential ; confess that they are home-sick, that they can't help thinking of mamma, left to cope alone with the mending-basket ; wish that they could fly over, just to

kiss the children, and tuck them up in their beds. Olivia, from the other end of the room, wonders what magic can have converted the half *gauche* reserve into that eager brightness! Cissy wonders too: at Gabrielle's patience. Miss Featherstone, dying of *ennui*, as is usual with her in the absence of gentlemen—believes that Gabrielle has grouped herself and her companions for the special edification of those all-conquering heroes, when they arrive.

Meanwhile, unconscious of observers, Gabrielle feels happier than she has felt since she quitted Lorton. The girls are talking of their eldest brother. So good, and so hardworking! He is just married, you know. It was considered foolish, Jessie, the eldest, believed; but it did not seem foolish to them. She was an orphan; so pretty—oh, lovely! almost as lovely as that young lady there—indicating The. She would have

been obliged to go out as a governess, when her father died ; but Robert could not bear the idea : so they married at once. Robert said that if they were faithful to one another, and worked hard, God would take care of them. Robert was in a London bank ; very clever : everybody said that he would get on. After all, poor people may be just as happy, and just as refined, as rich ones : does not Miss Wynn think so ? Yes ; Miss Wynn does think so. Anxiety, of course, they must expect ; but where is there not anxiety ?

The door opens. An influx of gentlemen : one, in Gabrielle's eyes pre-eminent. Suppose *he* were a clerk in a bank, and his wife obliged to pinch and save and economize ; would she not, nevertheless, be the happiest woman in the world ? “ Oh yes ! ” Gabrielle exclaims aloud ; then, as the girls stare in surprise, turns it off by some irrelevant

observation. Suddenly they become shy again, and shrink into themselves. Gabrielle's sensible neighbour of the dinner-table, is steering towards her. Without ceremony, he sits down at her side ; and resumes his conversation. Presently approaches also the fashionable young man, with another of the same species ; whom he has informed, that a confounded pleasant girl is over there ;—better come and make her acquaintance. Once more, Gabrielle catches James's eye. He looks as though he wondered whether she feels his neglect, whether she thinks that he might come and speak to her, if only a few words—if only to ask a trivial question or two, about her visit, and so forth. Perhaps he imagines that she is jealous. She again exerts herself ; summons all her self-control ; and maintains her “confounded pleasant” character. Words come freely ; ideas flow ; she is amazed at her own powers.

The shy girls listen, envy her ease, her freedom from self-consciousness. By degrees, and without knowing it, she becomes the centre of a choice little *côterie*. Some of the most agreeable people present—both ladies and gentlemen—are attracted in passing; pause; and linger.

“Your cousin used to be shy, I thought,” observes Miss Featherstone.

“I suppose she has outgrown it,” James replies, with perfect impassability. Miss Featherstone can't make him out, as respects Gabrielle. She quite understands him, however, as respects herself; so dismisses the subject. James feels a certain proud satisfaction in Gabrielle's popularity. Yet his heart aches. He wishes that bed-time were come, and the lights put out, and the people gone. He is sick of them all; sick of the world and of everything in it.

Olivia asks Gabrielle to sing; Gabrielle

trembles, but consents. She follows Olivia, the fashionable young man following her, all down the long room to the piano. Some one gets her portfolio; the fashionable young man holds it, while she chooses a song. She draws off her gloves; the fashionable young man takes them, and prepares to turn over the leaves. She hears her voice, as though it were not her voice, ring through the room. The hum of conversation subsides; every one is listening: among the rest, James—whom she sees standing in the doorway of the conservatory. There is a shadow on his face; as she sings, the shadow deepens: but that she cannot see.

People flock about her. She has made a sensation; is compelled to accept an *encore*: and winds up with a fit of coughing. Olivia whispers that she is a naughty child, has caught cold, and must have a dose. Others succeed to the piano; Gabrielle re-

turns to the shy girls : who welcome her gladly. The fashionable young man still hangs about her. Before his mind flashes a wild vision of marriage on £800 a year ; he feels, however, that he is not formed for Love in a Cottage. He likes her uncommonly, he says to himself : but crushes the vision.

The long evening drags to an end. Gabrielle and the shy girls rise together. James determines that he may, at any rate, wish her good-night ; and makes towards her for the purpose : but, before he can reach her, she is gone. He stops short, and wishes that he had been quicker, or that the morning were come : at present, everything is a blank. The girls, in excess of gratitude, kiss Gabrielle, as she leaves them at the head of the stairs. In her own room, Cissy is waiting ; and bounds to meet her.

"Gabrielle ! Gabrielle ! See the conquering heroine ! If you meant it, how jealous I should be !"

"Meant what, Cissy ?"

"Your exertions have worn you out, my dear ; you look tired to death. I mustn't stay to talk. Never mind, darling—" with a sudden embrace—"Brave it out ; and everything will come right."

She has vanished before Gabrielle can reply.

Enter Olivia's maid, bearing a waiter : thereon, a measure-glass, containing a decoction of camphor and ipecacuanha, duly proportioned ; also a lozenge, to be taken after the same. Gabrielle, albeit reluctant, swallows both. Anything for peace : anything to be left alone.

Well ! at length she was alone, and able to cry out her cry undisturbed. And she cried till the dawn was breaking, and the

tears, from utter exhaustion, gave place to a state that was less sleep than insensibility, less rest than a respite.

CHAPTER III.

Were there ever any
 Writhed not at passéd joy ?
 To know the change and feel it,
 When there is none to heal it,
 Nor numbéd sense to steal it—
 Was never said in rhyme !

JOHN KEATS.

THE servants whispered that Master was courting Miss Featherstone ; and without doubt the servants were right. No guest at Farnley could ever complain that he, much less she, was neglected ; James shewed himself as expert in the rôle of host, as in every other rôle with which he had to do : but it soon began to be understood that the cream of his attentions belonged to The.

Were a chair left vacant near The, in an evening, it was shortly filled by James. Were she summoned to the piano, James stood at her elbow, turned over her leaves, picked up her handkerchief. Were a starlight promenade proposed, it was James who placed her cloak on her shoulders—James who paced beside her, talking in low, starlight fitting tones. The felt herself exalted to the seventh heaven. Her name was universally coupled with his. Her co-visitors so coupled it. Letters flew daily on the wings of steam to all parts of the United Kingdom, and to some of other kingdoms, so coupling it. Mr. Gordon himself, and, apparently, Olivia—although, indeed, for Olivia's opinion, The cared little—were content that it should be so coupled. And Mr. Gordon was one of the richest commoners, Farnley was one of the finest estates, and

the family was one of the oldest and best, in England. If in literary matters, moreover, he went on as he had begun, his reputation—all the first critics agreed—would be world-wide. And this clever, distinguished man, this lion, was her slave. She had enthralled him: she, Theodosia Featherstone.

So things went smoothly with The, just now. She could afford to laugh at Cissy's cutting speeches: which were dealt forth in no mean measure, at every opportunity. She could afford to despise Gabrielle, as equally beneath notice and anxiety. She could afford to abstain from other flirtations. Only one cloud, one tiny cloud, darkened her thoughts of the future. For the present, its shadow was confined to her own breast. Long might it continue so!—and quickly, ere it interposed, might she consummate her conquest!

Visitors came and went ; but The stayed. Mrs. Featherstone departed into Scotland ; but The was left. Good, unselfish Olivia saw what was passing ; and who could have numbered the pangs which, in these days, she endured ? They were endured, however, in silence. No regrets of hers should mar her idol's happiness.

What puzzled poor Gabrielle in the matter, was not the circumstance of James's defection to The ; this appeared only too natural!—but the other, concomitant circumstance : that he avoided herself. That his interest in her and her pursuits, seemed suddenly to have perished ; that he scarcely ever so much as spoke to her, of his own free choice ; that, when obliged to do so, his voice was so cold, his manner so indifferent. In short, that he appeared entirely changed : not to others, not in himself, but to her.

Vainly she strove to understand it; recapitulating in her mind every event of the fortnight which had preceded her visit to Lorton. Sometimes she fancied that she had offended him. Sometimes she wondered whether he had heard, and wished to annihilate, the report mentioned by Charlie. Sometimes, again, a wild ray of hope suggested *pique* on Charlie's account, as sufficient cause for all. She could have borne his behaviour to The, she told herself, so much better, if only he were still kind—genial, cousinly, as in the early days when the ice between them was broken! But she did not know her own heart. As things now were, utter coldness was better than kindness such as this.

She was silent and patient; she tried to be brave; but unawares she drooped. The old wan look returned; her cough lingered,

although the weather was warm and fine. The constant struggle to seem what she was not, was so wearing—both to mind and body. How hard, when her heart was aching as it had never ached before; when the craving for a smile, a look, a pleasant word—yes, and for more—seemed to be consuming her life; when only by a continual strain, could the impatient tears be stayed: how hard, under these circumstances, she found it to mingle with the guests—to laugh and talk and sing—to maintain an ever-cheerful countenance, an ever-ready smile: those alone who have been tried in a similar manner, can estimate. But she succeeded. At this time, she acquired a certain dignity, a self-possession, which became her well; and which, notwithstanding her popularity, her attractiveness to gentlemen, prevented, almost entirely, ill-natured remarks; prevented, also, any too obtrusive attentions.

No one who saw the gentle, graceful girl, merely as she appeared in common society, would have imagined what passionate depths, what capacities for rejoicing and for suffering, lay beneath that serene exterior.

Olivia observed her delicate looks; and set them down to late hours, excitement, and the heat. That Gabrielle was happy; perfectly happy: Olivia never doubted. Cissy alone understood; and, at present, Cissy's existence was passed, in a perpetual wrath with regard to James, a perpetual viciousness with regard to The, and, with regard to Gabrielle, a perpetual solicitude—half pitiful, half tender.

One afternoon, the two girls, having escaped the respective wiles of a croquet party, a boating party, and an archery party, were sitting together in the park. They had with them "Fouqué's Seasons;" and Gabrielle was trying to make Cissy

recognize in Undine the likeness to herself. But 'Cissy was in one of her maddest moods ; and could not, if she would, be serious. The reading was therefore after this fashion : a sentence from Gabrielle, and an absurd comment from Cissy ; another sentence, and another comment : and so *ad infinitum*.

"I think," said Gabrielle, closing the book at length, "we'll put it off till you are sober."

"Thanks, dear ; I never knew, till this moment, that insobriety was among my vices. But now that you've set it before me, I'll see about taking the pledge. Gabrielle ! we were discussing faces, yesterday ; and our opinions differed. Now there—coming in our direction, too—is a face which I do like ; kind, honest, everything nice. Can't you see, stupid child ? Not floating

in the atmosphere—but fastened to that young man.”

“Why, it is Charlie!” cried Gabrielle, starting to her feet. “He said he would come soon.”

“Oh! so there is the far-famed Charlie,” mused Cissy, sitting composedly in her snug nook under the bush, and watching the greeting. “Why can’t people have sense, I wonder? That face is worth ten of James’s.”

“Come and be introduced to Cissy,” Gabrielle meanwhile was saying. He was already prejudiced in Cissy’s favour; and very pretty and charming he thought her: as, rising, she bestowed on him a little *piquante* bow—like the majority of Cissy’s movements, peculiarly her own.

“Did you walk, Charlie?” asked Gabrielle.

"No, I rode. I have left my horse at Mr. Morris's."

"And I suppose," said Cissy, "you spied us out from Mr. Morris's garden?"

"Yes; I could not be quite sure, you know; but I thought I recognized Gabrielle's figure."

"What! both together, taken for Gabrielle's figure? Poor Gabrielle!" murmured Cissy, under her breath. "Will you let us escort you to the house, Mr. Godfrey?" she said, aloud. "My brother is out, I fear; but we shall find my sister Olivia, and a few other ladies."

Then Cissy, who could, upon occasion, be very demure, picked up "*Fouqué's Seasons*," called Gipsy,—and they proceeded to the house.

"You have not lost your cough," said Charlie, eyeing Gabrielle somewhat anxiously.

"My dear Charlie! what an ominous tone of voice," she exclaimed, laughing. But to him, who knew her so well, the laugh had an unnatural sound.

Again he looked at her anxiously: stifling a sigh. Neither sigh nor look was lost on Cissy's sharp eyes.

"We have been reading 'Undine,' Mr. Godfrey," she said to divert his thoughts.

"'Undine?' Gabrielle, do you remember reading it with me, those Easter holidays?"

"I should think I did! We read 'Verdant Green,' at the same time; and 'Maud;' and Arnold's Life."

"Rather a heterogeneous company," observed Cissy: "So you read 'Verdant Green?' By-the-by, Gabrielle, Mr. Bouncer is my favourite character in fiction."

"That's a unique taste for a young lady!" said Charlie, smiling. "My cousin

Euphrosyne has set up one of those victimizing books of questions—‘What is your favourite quality?’ and so forth—the most awful bore! I was dragged through all the twenty-one, yesterday, and I haven’t got over it yet. But I was about to observe: the other answers were chiefly written by young ladies; and Guy, in the ‘Heir of Redclyffe,’ was almost invariably the favourite hero. Now and then came ‘John Halifax,’ or Claude, in ‘Ivors.’ But Guy was by far the champion.”

“Who is your favourite hero, Charlie?”

“Well—I did put down Mark Tapley,” said Charlie, in an apologetic tone: “I’m not quite sure about it, you know. But he is such an awfully jolly fellow—so unselfish and good-natured.”

“Yes; delightful!” cried Cissy. “I never cared for Guy. I grieve to state that angels pall on me.”

"Guy was not an angel, though ; he was a human being," said Gabrielle : "He had plenty of faults ; only he conquered them."

"Yes, you must take care what you say about Guy, Miss Gordon, before Gabrielle. By Jove, I shall never forget the state she was in, when first she read that book ! You should have seen her eyes, one particular evening. Guy was just dead."

"Now, Charlie, be quiet : " said Gabrielle, laughing : "Neither you nor Cissy can appreciate Miss Yonge."

"The amount of detail in her books is quite too much for my weak patience," said Cissy.

"But it is just the detail that makes them so useful. They show us how the great principles may be carried out in every-day life."

"James calls them the Much Ado about Nothing library," said Cissy.

“ Ah !” Gabrielle answered softly : “ But James often forgets, that

‘ Little things,
On little wings,
Bear little souls to Heaven.’ ”

Her colour mantled as she spoke. Cissy darted a sharp glance at Charlie ; and, somewhat to her vexation, caught his eye. She instantly looked past him, calling to Gipsy, who was frisking in the grass : much as his mistress would have frisked, had not the rules of propriety restrained her. But somehow, Charlie, from this moment, felt that Cissy was his friend.

Half an hour later, the boating party, among whom were Miss Featherstone and James, appeared in the croquêt ground : The having decreed that the sun was too hot for boating.

“ Oh, Charlie ! ”—were the first words which James heard—“ Do croquêt that hor-

rid blue away; and then come to me,—I want your help so much!”

“There, Gabrielle: blue won’t trouble us again, in a hurry!—Oh! how are you, Mr. Gordon? I did not see you, before.”

“How are you?” repeated James; and moved away: turned his back on the whole party.

“James, just come here a moment. I want to speak to you.”

“Well, Olivia?”

“Can’t you ask Mr. Godfrey to dinner, some day? He has seen so little of Gabrielle, lately.”

James gave an impatient kick to a pebble at his feet; and Olivia caught a mutter which more than resembled “Confound it!”

“The other day,” he said gruffly, after a pause: “the other day, when I met him at Rotherbridge, I told him that he might as well come over for a few nights. I suppose there’s no objection?”

"None whatever. What objection could there possibly be? Unless, indeed, you disapprove of him for Gabrielle? In that case, something should be done at once——"

"Oh, confound it!"—an unmistakable "confound it," this time.

Then a change, almost a humble change, of tone.

"I beg your pardon, Olivia. Oh yes, I approve of him."

And James turned away. Olivia's eyes followed him anxiously. He could not be well. Or had he taken a dislike to Mr. Godfrey? Or perhaps he was fatigued, and therefore irritable? Yes. That was very probable indeed.

Meanwhile James, having retired to a little distance, was looking on at the game. Charlie and Gabrielle stood together, somewhat apart from the rest: he earnestly talking, she listening, with downcast eyes. When called to

play, she started ; moving slowly, as though pre-occupied.

“ James ! are you watching Gabrielle and Mr. Godfrey ? Isn't it nice ? Or rather aren't you disgusted ?—for I know how you despise falling in love and all such nonsense. To me, a weaker mortal, it is great fun.”

“ All life seems to be great fun to you, Cissy. You'll feel differently, perhaps, some day.”

His tone was half sad, half bitter. Cissy's conscience gave her a prick. But the prick was soon over. He was a naughty, selfish boy ; and the more he suffered, the better !

“ Good-bye,” she said, with a provoking little curtsy : and skipped away.

“ Gabrielle,”—Charlie was saying, “ you don't look well ; and——”

“ Yes ?”

“ You don't look happy.”

"I wish you wouldn't watch me so," cried Gabrielle, with a touch of petulance.

He looked hurt; and she instantly repented.

"Oh, dear Charlie! I beg your pardon. I didn't mean that, indeed. Sometimes I hardly know what I say; I feel so cross and irritable—so different from what I was at Eversfield. I wish I had never seen this place."

"Why! I thought you——"

"You thought I seemed so happy here? Yes, I was—I am. Never mind: don't trouble yourself about me, Charlie."

Then, as he still earnestly regarded her, she added, her colour rising: "There are things which I cannot tell, even to you."

Yes; she spoke truly. Between him and this young heart—all open, once, before him, lay now an unfathomable gulf. Another—in those old familiar days, a stranger—

might cross that gulf one day; but he, never.

"I know, Gabrielle. I hope I should not wish to pry into what you would rather keep to yourself. Only you must remember that I am your—your—brother; and that whenever I can help you, I will. Do you see?"

She looked up into his face, with a grateful smile which almost repaid him, as he deserved, for his self-forgetting self-command. And she felt in her heart that a true friend is one of God's best gifts.

When the croquet was over, James approached Charlie, and repeated the invitation of which he had spoken to Olivia. Charlie accepted it, fixing a date; and then departed—much to James's relief.

"I'm a terrible dog in the manger!" he thought, his eyes mechanically fixed upon the retreating figure.

"Gabrielle," said Cissy, tossing her mallet

into the air, and catching it with much dexterity: "Gabrielle, that Mr. Godfrey is remarkably fond of you!"

"Yes," said Gabrielle, listlessly: "Of course he is."

"Of course? Highty-tighty! And why not you of him, pray?"

"Why, Cissy, I am. I love him with all my heart."

"Just so," said Cissy, catching her mallet for the last time, and throwing it upon the grass. She added nothing further; and Gabrielle thought her even more odd than usual.

Meanwhile, Charlie and Mr. Morris, who had met in the park, were walking slowly, arm in arm, towards the creeper-covered cottage. Very downcast was Charlie's face; more for Gabrielle's sake than his own.

"Miss Wynn out of spirits? Sorry to hear it. Afraid there's a reason," said Mr. Morris.

"Poor young things!" he muttered, under his breath. "Generation after generation!"

"What reason do you mean?" inquired Charlie, ignoring the mutter.

"Afraid Gordon's something of a flirt. At any rate, he's behaving strangely. Making up, now, to Miss Featherstone. Everyone says so. Observed it myself."

Charlie stopped short in his walk.

"No, by Jove! is he?" he exclaimed, with a passionate stamp. Then, his face crimson, wrenching his arm away, he strode on at a furious pace: while poor Mr. Morris panted and puffed behind.

"My dear—Godfrey"—in panting gusts—"Be calm.—Wait a minute.—Can't—I—oh!——"

The young man, brought suddenly to his senses, paused; and Mr. Morris puffed,—supported by a tree.

"Pray forgive me," began Charlie, full

of compunction. Mr. Morris waved his hand.

"Say no more. Say no more. Understand . . . Can go on now . . . We must take men as we find them, my dear Godfrey. He is young; has much to learn. He may be acting from pique. Ah!"—a heavy, groaning sigh: "Pique has broken many a heart ere now."

"If he breaks Gabrielle's heart, I'll never forgive him."

"Now don't, my dear boy. Ah, don't!" said Mr. Morris, shaking his head. "Be charitable. We're all, everyone of us, selfish by nature. And in things of this sort, there are hidden machineries; fancies, jealousies. Certainly he seems to be behaving wrongly; but——"

"Wrongly! If I believed that he were vexing Gabrielle—trifling with her feelings—I'd—— Nothing would be too bad for him!"

"He can't read her face as you do, remember. Apparently, she is happy. Laughs and talks as usual. Very popular."

"Well! I may be mistaken. I'll wait and see. I have vowed to protect her; and protect her I will," murmured Charlie. He spoke less to Mr. Morris than to himself; but Mr. Morris heard.

"Ah, poor boy!" he said, pityingly: "How can you protect her? These things are not under our control."

"There are means of punishing such rascals, though. I'd call him out—I'd let every one know—I'd——"

"Hush!" said Mr. Morris, raising his hand. Into his manner came a strange calm dignity, commanding Charlie's attention. "Remember what you are. Is Vengeance yours? Is this the spirit in which you would preach, visit, fulfil your ministry?"

The young man felt himself abashed ; he made no reply.

“Is Vengeance yours?” Mr. Morris repeated : and looked far upward, as though his eyes would pierce the sky : “Was Vengeance mine? To know that one dearer than life—” his voice faltered—“has been oppressed, slighted ; and to be still : it is hard—hard. But our duty. Remember that. It was my duty. It is yours. We must wait, believe. All will be right at last. All is overruled. And for good.”

“Yes, I was wrong,” said Charlie humbly : “I was half mad for the moment. And perhaps, after all, Gabrielle’s trouble may be something quite apart from Gordon?”

He looked into Mr. Morris’s face, as though seeking, nay imploring, an assent.

“Perhaps—” said Mr. Morris, doubtfully : “But if not—” and he laid his hand on

Charlie's shoulder—"don't be too much cast down. A little sorrow won't hurt her. Sorrow is God's best teacher. And we have all—yes, the highest of us—much to learn."

Somehow, as Charlie rode back to Lorton, he found himself raised beyond the atmosphere of second causes: and a voice in his heart whispered, that this rugged specimen of humanity, with the furrowed face, and the ill-made clothes, and the uncouth manner, knew more, after all, about the true secret of life, than he: more, perhaps, than any among those whom he had been chiefly accustomed to respect.

CHAPTER IV.

Does he love you as of old ?

ALFRED TENNYSON.

AT this time, Cissy's existence was not without a spice of romance on her own score. Among the second set of visitors, was one Mr. Trevor, who paid her open and most unmistakable attentions ; and Gabrielle, at first, felt at a loss to decide whether Cissy approved of them or no.

He was about thirty years of age ; handsome, gentlemanlike, and agreeable ; and being an old friend—or at least an old acquaintance—of the family, was thoroughly at home at Farnley. His stay was prolonged far beyond the ten days which, in

arriving, he had named ; and, throughout it, morning, noon, and night, saw him pursuing Cissy. Pursuing : for, generally, Cissy fled—literally fled—before him ; from room to room, from house to garden, from garden to house. But then, when almost hopeless, he seemed on the point of retiring from the field, she would alter her tactics ; would smile sweetly, receive his pretty speeches, and send him to and fro on her errands. This till his confidence returned : the signal for her coyness to return likewise.

“Cissy,” said Gabrielle, one evening, as, after leaving the dining-room, they stood together in a window of the saloon : “Cissy, do you know—have you observed, that Mr. Trevor seems——”

“Rather smitten with me?” said Cissy, supplying the gap : “Of course I have. Months and months ago.”

Gabrielle stared.

“What great shocked eyes, my darling ! Well ! I'll tell you all about it. The rest of them may set me down as a flirt, and welcome : it will give them pleasure, poor dears ! But you, perhaps, would prefer to come behind the scenes.”

“You are acting on principle, then ?”

“Thoroughly,” said Cissy, with deep emphasis : “Do you remember what I said, one day, about flirting ? that, in my opinion, flirting may often be turned to account, as a very proper means of punishment ? Well ! I am now punishing Mr. Trevor ; and richly he deserves it.”

“Why ! what has he done ?” said Gabrielle, astonished.

Cissy's colour rose ; her eyes sparkled.

“Nothing can be too bad for him !” she cried, clenching her fist. “He jilted a girl, last year, Gabrielle : coolly and deliberately jilted her : after winning her affec-

tions—which are by no means susceptible—professing to love her as she loved him,—and all the rest of it. The wedding-day was on the point of being fixed; when he—he—well, I need not mince matters, to you. He saw me, the first time for three years; and . . . you may guess the sequel. If he chooses to be Crosbie, he must, I suppose. But I won't be Lady Alexandrina."

She paused, and a long silence ensued: Cissy musing over her indignation, Gabrielle undecided as to whether she might admire, or whether she ought to condemn. Finally a third feeling overpowered her.

"It is a miserable world," she said.

"Fudge! A bad world," cried the furious Cissy. "If you only knew Lucy Ward, Gabrielle! She is a perfect jewel of a girl: ten thousand times nicer than any other girl whom I ever knew.—till I knew you. And now her life is spoiled; and all

through him ! Why was he so weak and so ill-governed ? If he did not know his own mind, it was better that he should not engage himself. However, he has been heartless to her ; and I'll be heartless to him."

"But—forgive me, Cissy—do you think that it is your province to take up her cudgels ?"

"No ; I don't think about it : except to be thankful that my conscience is tougher than yours ! And whether it be my province, or the Pope's, or Punch and Judy's, or anybody's, I mean to do it. So say no more, Gabrielle. I shan't listen."

And Cissy stopped her ears.

Gabrielle understood her sufficiently well to know, that expostulation would be useless. The subject was therefore, by mutual consent, tabooed between them ; Cissy silently executing her own plans, and Gabri-

elle, in equal silence, watching their progress : half pitying Mr. Trevor, half seconding her cousin, and withal, considerably amused.

Cissy, at this time, was an unspeakable comfort to Gabrielle. Over and over again, when she was on the point of giving way, and of betraying her misery by a burst of irrepressible tears, Cissy, discerning the case from afar, would hasten to her side, and draw her out of the room, forbidding the rest to follow. Such conduct, in any one but Cissy, would have been considered singular ! but nobody who knew Cissy, and Cissy's caprices, ever wondered at what Cissy chose to do. Alone with her, Gabrielle felt herself free from constraint. She might cry ; and Cissy would only caress her, asking no questions, making no remarks. She might sit grave and silent ; and Cissy would take it as a matter of course. Be-

tween them had arisen a secret understanding that Cissy knew all about everything ; that, although she said little, she saw much : and this, in itself, was a consolation. Words, in Gabrielle's present state, would only have caused her to shrink more morbidly into herself ; but silence, such eloquent silence as Cissy's, fell on her heart like balm.

In these days—outwardly and inwardly so sultry and so dry—she knew no greater refreshment than to return, in spirit, to Eversfield ; to retrace that past which, as it grew in distance, grew also in sweetness and in brightness. She would walk again with her father, through the familiar lanes ; she would teach again in the old Sunday school—would gaze on the old views, repeat the old conversations. She would recall the time when, even in her dreams, she had pictured no fuller love than that of parent and of child ; when, next to this, had ranked her affection

for Charlie; when Charlie was her *beau-ideal* of a young man; when he and she had gone nutting, blackberrying, cowslip-gathering together, with almost childish delight. She would sleep once more in her own little bed, her face turned towards the old gray church: she would wake once more in the early mornings, and lie listening to the cawings in the rookery hard by. Thus, at length, the intervening life, with its changes, would pass into a dream: until, suddenly, the gong, that grand, mansion-like gong, would sound: or the rustle of dresses—dresses such as Eversfield had never seen—would presage an invasion of her solitude; or a voice, that voice which she never heard without a thrill unknown in those early days, caused her to start and colour and awaken: to find the dream too real.

She was occasionally somewhat distressed by perceiving herself the object of a close

and constant scrutiny on the part of Mr. Morris. Mr. Morris had *carte blanche* to present himself at the park, whenever he so pleased. Generally he did not so please; preferring his own study, his meditations, and his Ten Tribes. But, just now, he had taken it into his head to appear at all hours, in or about the house; and to mingle with the guests. And continually, sitting alone in a dusky corner; or standing, a shabby spot in a gay circle; or so conversing with anyone near him, as to convey the idea that he was, if not a positive lunatic, "deficient:" Mr. Morris was watching Garielle.

She could not imagine why. The circumstance puzzled her, when she considered it, almost as much as did the change in James. But one thing was certain: she must, in consequence, maintain a double guard. Thus, in Mr. Morris's presence, her laugh was more

ringing, her voice was more frequently heard, than at any other time. The result was, that she overshot her mark; and Mr. Morris became assured of a fact which he had hitherto suspected merely: that Gabrielle was unhappy. Further, that she was ill.

His heart bled both for her and for Charlie: Charlie, whom he regarded as his son in the spirit; whom he felt even tremblingly desirous to protect and counsel and assist. Strong though his will might be, however, his resources were few and weak. But one thing lay within his power; and that one thing he did. Night after night, at this period, "when all the world was still," he, kneeling in his study, poured forth his solitary prayers: which, soaring far beyond the stars, bore Gabrielle's name, and Charlie's name, and sometimes, also, James's name, to the Throne of the Most High.

It was now the second week in September, and the autumnal tints had begun to glorify the woods. The first month of Gabrielle's trial was over. Some of us thrive, physically, no less in sorrow than in joy; with others, body and mind droop or flourish together; among such was Gabrielle. This month had wrought in her a perceptible change. Her strength, none too great at any time, had of late been steadily diminishing; she did not lose her cough, although the weather was warm and bright; and there was a feverishness, a shortness of breath, a general lassitude, about her, which alarmed Olivia. She put her young cousin under a course of tonics; and decided that if, after a week's nursing, she were not considerably better, she must see the doctor.

Nothing loath was Gabrielle to sink into the *dolce far niente* of an invalid. She had long felt weak and tired; and she submitted

very contentedly, to be installed in an arm-chair in the school-room, with a book on her lap, a bunch of grapes at her side, and Cissy for her companion.

“Shall I disturb you, dear, if I try these songs? They have just come, and I am dying to know what they are.”

“Oh yes; do try them, Cissy. I should like to hear them, so much.”

“And you won't mistake me for a peacock, and fancy it's going to rain? This looks pretty—‘Rock me to sleep, Mother.’”

Seating herself at the piano, she began forthwith: not pausing to scrutinize the words. And Gabrielle listened, thinking not of the young unknown mother, who had lain nineteen years in her grave; but of him who had been to her father and mother in one, and to whom, throughout this miserable month, her heart had turned with an intensity of longing, sharper than any that she had felt since his death.

"Backward, turn backward, oh Time, in your flight ;
Make me a child again, just for to-night!
Mother, come back from the echoless shore,
Take me again to your heart, as of yore.

Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care,
Smooth the silver threads out of my hair ;
Over my slumbers your loving watch keep,
Rock me to sleep, Mother, rock me to sleep.

Mother, dear Mother ! the years have been long,
Since I last hushed to your lullaby song ;
Yet with strong yearning and passionate pain,
Long I to-night for your presence again.

Over my heart in the days that are flown,
No love like mother-love ever has shone ;
No other worship abides and endures—
Faithful, unselfish, and patient, like yours.

Sick of the hollow, the base, the untrue,
Mother, dear Mother, my heart calls for you :
Never hereafter to wake or to weep,
Rock me to sleep, Mother ! rock me to sleep !"

When Cissy had finished there was a pause.
Then Gabrielle said,

"Don't sing that again, Cissy ; I cannot
bear it :"—and burst into an agony of weep-
ing.

In a moment, Cissy was off the music-
stool, and kneeling at Gabrielle's side. She

had seen Gabrielle cry before, but nothing like this had Cissy ever seen : in Gabrielle or in any other. As she knelt there, all too conscious of her impotence to soothe ; taking helpless note of the dejected, the despairing attitude ; of the head bowed low upon the hands ; of the girlish frame every minute convulsed by a terrible, deep-drawn sob ; of the tears flowing on and on, as though exhaustless : she felt that here was wretchedness which she could not fathom, could not even comprehend. Something of awe mingled with her compassion ; something of fear also ;—sorrow in the abstract seemed brought so alarmingly near !

“ Gabrielle—dear, darling child—do, do try to stop crying. You will make yourself so ill ! Do try, darling. Don't give way like this.”

“ I wouldn't, Cissy—if I could help it. But I can't—I can't stop.”

And Cissy said nothing further. Clasp-
ing her arms round Gabrielle's waist, and rest-
ing her head upon her shoulder, she waited
until the storm should pass.

Suddenly the door opened; James burst
into the room, a buttonless glove in his hand.

"Here, Cissy! have you got a needle
and——"

He stopped, in blank consternation. One
hasty step forward he made: then paused
again. What right had he to be her com-
forter?

"Send him away—oh, send him away,"
whispered Gabrielle, tightening the pressure
of her hands; and Cissy frowned at him
furiously, shaking her head. But James did
not stir. He stood as if spell-bound—as if
his eyes were rivetted to the sight.

A moment later, up jumped Cissy, darted
like a flash of lightning across the room, and,
holding the door open, marshalled him out,

with the air of an offended queen. Out he went—but drew her after him ; clasping her wrist so firmly, that she could not have escaped, without a struggle : which, for Gabrielle's sake, she forewent, and, in a highly dignified manner, allowed herself to follow in his train.

Then, setting her back against the closed door, she regarded him with a stony stare, and inquired what he wanted.

“Tell me at once, if you please ; and be quick about it. I must go back to Gabrielle.”

“Cissy, what is the matter with Gabrielle?”

“Oh ! Is that all ? You would like to know, I daresay ; you were always inquisitive. But I shan't tell you. So leave my wrist alone.”

“Cissy, I must know.”

“Must, indeed ! Are you Mr. Godfrey, that you should come in this lofty manner, and demand to hear Gabrielle's secrets ?

And all this time, she may be fainting! Do get away to The Featherstone, James! how can you be so ungentlemanlike? Let me go, I say."

And Cissy, wrenching her wrist free: a matter of little difficulty,—for James perceived that he should gain nothing by detaining it: rushed back into the school-room, taking the precaution to lock the door behind her.

Gabrielle was quiet now; the tears had ceased. "Oh, did he see?" she asked languidly, as Cissy resumed her place.

"Yes, he did: and serve him right!" muttered Cissy, under her breath.

"Never mind, darling," she said aloud; "don't trouble yourself about him."

"But did he see?"

"Well, of course he *saw*," replied Cissy, coaxingly: "But what then? He could not know——"

Here she stopped ; feeling that, to use a vulgar expression, she was "putting her foot in it."

"What did he say?"

"Oh dear ! what dreadful pertinacity !" thought Cissy. "Say ? Nothing much. Only asked what was the matter, and——"

"And——?"

"Gabrielle, you are incorrigible. Well ! he got into a desperate state, dragged me out of the room—just see my wrist !" said Cissy, in a parenthesis : displaying a very pretty white wrist, on which the faintest possible tinge of red was fast becoming invisible :—"and asked what was the matter with Gabrielle ? said he Must know, or some such nonsense : and glared like a tiger—or what is the creature ? However, I told him there was no Must in the case, and . . . Etc., Etc. Now, Gabrielle, go to sleep."

"What else did you tell him ?"

“Oh, Gabrielle! Gabrielle! what shall I do? Well! if you will be obstinate—I inquired: which was unnecessary, for of course I knew: whether he were Mr. Godfrey.”

“Oh, Cissy! why did you say that? I wish you hadn't!”

But the wish was not very strong. And he had been “in a desperate state;” had said that he “Must know.” He cared for her still, then, a little. Perhaps—oh perhaps—some day, all might come right!

And as she lay back in her chair, resigning herself to her fatigue, there was more of peace in Gabrielle's heart, than she had known for weeks.

“Now you must have some wine. I'll get some myself, from the housekeeper's room; that Wilcox mayn't see your eyes. Lie still. I shall be back in a moment.”

Away flew Cissy. But she was not back

in a moment ; or in many moments. The housekeeper was upstairs ; the wine was under lock and key ; and a considerable delay ensued. And meanwhile, Gabrielle, thoroughly exhausted, dropped asleep : the tears still wet upon her cheeks.

James was hanging about, restlessly, in the hall : pausing sometimes before a window, sometimes before a statue ; but seeing nothing. He had been in a hurry, when he entered the school-room ; and, in fact, his horse was, at this moment, waiting, saddled and bridled, at the foot of the steps. Both horse and hurry, however, were forgotten now.

Presently, the suspense became intolerable. He returned to the school-room ; opened the door. Cissy was gone, Gabrielle asleep ; he entered with hushed tread, walked to her side, and, half sitting, half leaning, on the table near her, gazed. And as he gazed,

his heart sank : lower, lower. Upon her brow was the impress of suffering. Something in the fall of her eyelids spoke of utter weariness, something in the lines of her mouth, of that inward sickness which wears the life away. Suddenly she moved, and spoke. He bent his head, and caught the words :

“ Never hereafter to wake or to weep—”

He recognized the quotation; yet he shuddered.

“ So *you* are here? That's quite unnecessary,” said Cissy's voice behind him : “ I beg you'll go again——Ah! I thought I should find her asleep.”

“ Cissy, how delicate Gabrielle looks !”

“ Fearfully delicate,” assented Cissy, with a thrill of vicious delight : “ Exactly as though she were going into a consumption. And I believe she is.”

He turned passionately upon her.

“What right have you to say that—and in such a flippant tone? Is it a thing to be talked of lightly? as if——”

He paused, and bit his lip : his voice had failed.

At this moment, with a little sigh, Gabrielle awoke. James, taken unawares, had no time to turn away. She had read of a look like this which now met hers ; she had never seen one, before. She did not start, or colour : she only drank it in, as though she were dreaming. She forgot for the instant her own identity ; forgot everything but those dark eyes, and their depth of unutterable love.

Suddenly she remembered ; blushed crimson ; and rose from her chair.

“Cissy, I have been asleep, I think. I hardly knew where I was.”

“No ; you are tired. Sit down again.”

It was James who spoke : his tone very gentle, very low.

She obeyed, she sat down, strangely happy. He poured out a glass of wine, with his own hand ; he bent, and gave it to her.

"You will feel better, when you have drunk this," he said :—"Cissy—take care of her."

And he was gone, as though he could trust himself no longer.

"When the night is darkest, the dawn is nearest." Only a few minutes ago, how dark had Gabrielle's night appeared ! and now, when she least expected it, light was come. Whether real dawn, or merely a transitory ray, she did not know. But one thing she did know. One fact that look had revealed.

"He does love me," she said to herself, as she sank back among the cushions. "I can't understand it. I can't tell why

he is like this. But he does love me."

The bitterest drop in her cup of trouble had passed.

And James?

James had taken refuge in the cold silence of the chapel. There, alone, save for the passionless monuments, the oaken angels, the saints on the stained windows; his agony might give itself vent.

"It cannot be that she loves me . . . has loved me all this time that I have broken her heart hers! . . . And I have gone too far to recede. . . . Oh, my God—Oh, my God!"

CHAPTER V.

Be mine a philosopher's life in the quiet woodland ways,
Where if I cannot be gay, let a passionless peace be my lot.

And most of all would I flee from the cruel madness of love,
The honey of poison-flowers, and all the measureless ill.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

JAMES, as he left the chapel, felt that he was degraded. He mounted his horse, and rode slowly away: pondering this degradation. Every moment revealed to him his own conduct in a more despicable light. When he had fancied himself highest, grandest, he had been playing the part of a villain: of an egotistical villain. He had closed his eyes to Gabrielle, and had opened them only to himself. His own aspirations,

his own advancement, had formed his one idea.

But again he said within his heart, that he had gone too far to recede. How would the world regard him, if he turned his back on Miss Featherstone, now? after attentions so public, so deliberate, as he had made it his business to pay her: attentions which she had encouraged, which—as all might see—had won her heart, or—James bitterly thought—the thing that answered to her heart? How would such conduct appear to her family, to her friends? How, indeed, to Gabrielle? Was it probable that Gabrielle would allow herself to be cast off, or taken up, at his pleasure? Of course she could not penetrate his motives. To her, he must simply seem a heartless, selfish flirt,—a slave to mere beauty, too: nay, even a hypocrite! For he remembered conversations which had unfolded to her the

sanctuary of his inner life ; which had revealed to her his highest aims, his most ambitious dreams. How, in her sight, did his practice and his theory accord? And, low as he had doubtless already sunk in her estimation, would he not, if, to return to her, he forsook Miss Featherstone, sink even lower? Would she not scorn and spurn him? as—well, perhaps as he deserved.

Or supposing every obstacle removed, supposing that she did receive him, and he made her his wife ; would not this bring him to the very point which to avoid, he had brought so much misery upon himself, and, as he feared, upon her? For if, when he scarcely spoke to her, from day to day ; when their fellowship was chiefly confined to meals at the same table, to a sojourn under the same roof : he yet from day to day loved her more, felt her grow deeper into his heart :—if this were the case now,

how would it be, were they united in the closest of all ties,—were she, in the sight of God and man, his own, to love and cherish, as a duty, till death? Such a state of things could not—no, could not—exist, without absorbing his whole heart and soul and mind; without, as he had dreaded, subordinating his intellect to his affections. And then he would have to own himself beaten: his own master nevermore!

Yet, if she loved him—if she had made her love him:—and so the storm began afresh, and the same conflicting questions repeated themselves in a ceaseless round. Until all was perplexed together, and only one definite idea remained. On the following day, Charlie Godfrey was expected. Olivia anticipated great results from his visit. It might be that Olivia was right, and that all indecision would thus be set to rest. It might be; James believed that he hoped

it. He determined, any way, to wait and see.

Later the same afternoon, in turning over a packet of papers, he came upon a leaf torn from an exercise-book, and covered with his own handwriting, as it had been at the age of eighteen.

“A TRUE PHILOSOPHER.”

“A true philosopher will never suffer himself to be greatly depressed or elated : excessive joy, grief, expectation, desire, being equally incompatible with the calm dignity which he will make it his first effort to attain. He will therefore love nothing so much as to be unable to resign it with composure. He will hate nothing so much as, in any degree, to bias his sense of justice. He will shrink from no pain, no self-denial, which may assist him in the ultimate achievement of good. And the term ‘good’ he

will not, with the majority of men, understand to mean pleasure, or happiness; but that state of circumstances which is most favourable to the highest development of his nature.

“He will preserve a rigid watch over the lower faculties; over the appetites and affections: both alike dangerous to one who would maintain a due equilibrium in all things. He will guard against any emotion that might lead him to depend upon the support, which may fail; the favour, which may change; the advice, which may misguide: of a fellow-creature. In short, he will endeavour, more and more, to be sufficient for himself. Thus no alteration in the things or persons around him, will have power to impair his serenity; and he will gradually acquire a loftiness of soul, a fixedness of purpose, a firmness of resolution, which will endow him with an almost un-

limited control over the spirits of inferior men.

“The highest state of humanity : my unalterable conviction.

“J. F. G., Eton, *May*, 18—”

Did it occur to James that this sketch of his, these notions of “the highest state of humanity,” might just as well have been written by some ancient Pagan of Greece or Rome? Perhaps it did. Perhaps, as he stood looking out over the park, the paper in his hand, some faint glimmer of light shadowed forth to him mountain peaks which, exalted as was his standard, left that standard far behind. But the glimmer died away. James laid down the paper with a sigh. He had fallen many steps backward, he thought, since the days when he was a boy.

Charlie Godfrey arrived at the appointed time : and Gabrielle, when she met his sun-

shiny smile, and felt her hand pressed warmly in his brotherly grasp, forgot, for the moment, all her troubles. Of course, Olivia contrived that he should take her in to dinner: and she would have been almost happy, she thought, as she sat there by his side, but for the consciousness of frequent, and—she fancied—anxious glances, thrown in their direction by James. And after each glance, he was thoughtful, silent; he seemed unhappy, harassed, worn. Oh, how puzzling it all was! If she could only, though but for one instant, look into his mind!

She would have beheld a strange confusion! Deeper and deeper became his perplexity, fiercer his conflict, throughout each day of Charlie Godfrey's visit. In spite of all that he had endeavoured to wish and hope, on the subject, he felt, as he saw them together, that should he ever so see them as husband and wife, the spectacle would drive

him mad. He was driven half mad, already, by the affectionate smiles which Gabrielle so often bestowed on this "true knight" of hers: by the brightness which shone out on the wan young face, whenever he approached; by the eager *tête-à-tête* conversations in retired corners: conversations in which topics seemed never to fail, or interest to flag.

And meanwhile, The Featherstone was growing less endurable, every day! James had, of late, discerned in her a slight coarseness of tone, something which jarred on his fastidious notions of woman as she should be. In fact, the young lady believed her prize secure: far gone, moreover, in that interesting state of feeling which is described as "blind." And thus, half unconsciously, she had begun to relax the guard that, at first, aware of his high standard, she had maintained: to suffer her words to flow,

without picking or culling, from her lips; freely, without fear of consequences, to betray a strange laxity of principle in little things, a strange confusion as regarded the boundaries of Wrong and Right. James, in his turn, began to be disgusted—a little alarmed, even. Was this the woman whom he would take to be the wife of his bosom? And as The sank in his estimation, Gabrielle rose; her gentle manners, her ingenuousness, her innocence, gained by contrast.

Had Gabrielle died at this time, or had she married, and gone away, her memory would have remained in his soul, as a saint in a shrine. It would have been to him a sacred thing, surrounded by a shadowy glory, and worthy of all reverence, evermore. He was growing, even now, to idealize her, after the Dante and Beatrice fashion, to see her, not as she was—a half-formed, rather morbid girl—but as his heart depict-

ed her : a being "peerless, without stain."

"What shall I do? What ought I to do?" he now continually asked himself. The bright youthfulness which had often astonished admirers of his genius, was fast fading into an habitual expression of care; while the purple hollows below his eyes, the lines in his forehead, bore witness to days, and nights also, of conflict and unrest.

Charlie, at this time, felt strongly inclined to demand from James, in so many words, an explanation of his conduct as regarded Gabrielle. But he restrained himself, conscious of his helplessness, and aware that the wisest plan in the end would be to let things take their course. There was, however, a coldness, a meaning reserve, in his manner towards James: which James observing, and judging Charlie by himself, attributed to jealousy. Cissy observed it also; and Cissy did not attribute it to jealousy. Cissy

and Charlie had liked one another from the first; and their mutual interest in Gabrielle served as a mutual attraction. Before the end of Charlie's visit, Cissy felt herself sufficiently intimate with him to determine that she would, if she could, "have it out with him," as respected James and Gabrielle; say something in palliation of her brother's conduct, and try to insinuate a few subtle words of comfort on his own score. In her inmost soul, Cissy was filled with wonder that Gabrielle could prefer James!

Accordingly, as, one afternoon, she was returning from a ramble in the park, she was not at all sorry to be overtaken by Charlie: who had been to see Mr. Morris. And suddenly—she hardly knew how—she had plunged into the thick of the subject; was telling Charlie that she had observed his savageness to James, and had guessed

the cause; and it was something connected with Gabrielle. Then, as his ready colour confessed the truth, she went on to expatiate; and ere long Charlie found himself discussing, quite openly, the whole affair, confiding to her the report which he had heard, his suspicions, and all the rest.

“And if Gabrielle were to die,” he exclaimed, warming with his subject, “if this cough were to end in—in—” his voice choked: “I shall always consider—forgive me, I must say it! that her blood lies at your brother’s door.”

“Now, Mr. Godfrey, don’t be grandiose; and do hear me out. She is not at all likely to die. And my brother—well, I will secretly confess, that, although he is my brother, I feel no less infuriated with him, than you do: perhaps even more. But, to give him his due, I believe that, until within the last few days, he had very little,

if any, idea, that Gabrielle cared much about him. You don't know James. He is very odd: very proud and highflown. He opines that falling in love is beneath the dignity of man—or something absurd of the kind. And, so assured was he that he never should, nor could, fall in love himself, that he did not know—of this I am certain—what his feelings for Gabrielle meant. He liked to be with her; and he indulged the liking: without thinking of consequences.”

“Then he ought to have thought of them.”

“Of course he ought. But he didn't. I'm telling you facts. Then, at last, he woke up, found out the truth, and changed his tactics. As to his violent courtship in the other quarter, that I'll leave. I confess I can't account for that. But one thing I know: he is intensely miserable.”

"Well! it is a pretty mess, altogether," said Charlie, in an exasperated tone: "Loving one person, and marrying another! I can't make head nor tail of it."

"We must take people as they are, Mr. Godfrey; 'grin and bear' them. I've long made up my mind to that, angry as I feel with them all—two or three excepted. As for James: you may safely leave him to avenge himself! His repentance will be bitter enough: never fear."

"So it should be," said Charlie, gruffly.

"Yes: and so should yours and mine: or Sundays might as well be called Fibbing days. But you see, in 'this 'ere world,' Mr. Godfrey, we neither do what we should, nor get what we should. Now here we are at the house; I must go in. Let me say just one thing more, though," said Cissy, looking into his downcast face.

"Well?" he answered, gloomily.

“Mr. Godfrey, I do feel so very sure that all will come right at last. James is wicked and miserable, now ; and The is beautiful and happy ; and Gabrielle is ill and desponding ; and you are—vexed. But just have a little patience, and the clouds will clear away, and the tables will be turned, and James will be good and repentant, and The ugly and wretched, and Gabrielle well and bright again, and you—as happy as you ought to be. There : that’s my prophecy ! So take heart, and remember :

‘ The darkest day,
Wait till to-morrow, will have passed away ! ’ ”

She ran off into the house ; and Charlie stood looking after her.

“What a dear little sunbeam that is !” he thought, as she vanished up the staircase.

Then he went back, and walked about in the park ; thinking of better times.

But Cissy was not a sunbeam that shone on all alike.

"Gabrielle," said she, at bedtime, the same evening, entering Gabrielle's room, in her dressing-gown : a pretty, Cissy-like dressing-gown, all white muslin and blue ribbon : her long hair streaming over it, in delightful confusion, her eyes sparkling, and her cheeks flushed : "Gabrielle! I have something to tell you."

"Is it anything very dreadful, Cissy? You look grave."

"You shall hear what it is in a moment. Perhaps *you* may call it dreadful. But first—for I see your eyes dilating—learn, to your comfort, that it is in no way mixed up with ghosts, or murderers, or escaped lunatics, or any dreadfulness of that sort. So don't look at the wardrobe, as if you expected it to open, and something—definite or indefinite—to come forth and devour you."

"I was not thinking of the wardrobe,

Cissy. Pray go on. I want to hear this wonderful piece of news."

"Oh! 'wonderful,' as it isn't 'dreadful!' No, my dear; I'm afraid there's no wonderfulness about it. At least, it has nothing to do with comets, or monsters, or carriages-turned-over-and-no-body killed, or anything of that kind. It is simply—harden your heart, Gabrielle! that Mr. Trevor has proposed to me; and that I—have sent him about his business. Or rather—for 'gentility' of expression is a duty—have given him his *congé*."

"Oh, Cissy—have you? Do begin at the beginning, and tell me the whole story. I am so very curious."

"I know it, my dear. If you looked a shade less tired, I should feel myself bound to put you to a little harmless suspense. But since you don't, I'll have compassion, and bring matters to a speedy conclusion."

I was alone in the conservatory, then, inspecting my pet cactus, when who should appear, without the slightest warning—or sound—but Mr. Trevor! He either walked on tiptoe; or his boots are soled with fur. Which is most probable, Gabrielle?”

“The fur, I should think. What did he say?”

“Say? I was never more startled in my life. It came like a flash of lightning. One minute, I was looking at my cactus; and the next, a whole volley of hearts and passions and life-long devotions, were being lavished at my feet: or on my head,—which is the poetical rendering? Such a speech! He must have composed it all beforehand,—learnt it by heart, and then spouted it very fast, because he was afraid of forgetting it. And suppose he had forgotten some of the principal words! What a jumble that would

have made ! Or transposed them ? Better still ! Eh, Gabrielle ? ”

“ Oh do, dear Cissy, be serious ! ”

“ Dear Gabrielle, so I will. I gave him his full fling, heard him quite out, before I answered a word. In fact, I was considering—don’t disown me ! how sharp I could make the final blow. However, he had so surprised me, as to expatriate my wits ; and all, after all, that came forth from me, was : ‘ I think, Mr. Trevor, you must mistake me for Miss Ward ! ’ ”

“ Oh, Cissy ! What happened then ? ”

“ Why, another volley. He had foreseen that remark, no doubt ; and had prepared accordingly. I’m sure he must congratulate himself that he didn’t, in his excitement, recite the second composition where the first should have been ; or *vice versa* ! All things considered, he got through very

well ; only he might have varied the style, a little : copied Dickens in the first, you know, and Johnson in the second : the effect would have been better. As it was, all was 'much of a muchness.' Who could bear comparison with me? What was Miss Ward by my side? Etc., Etc. With a wind-up about the Koh-i-noor."

"The Koh-i-noor, Cissy?"

"Well—he said a priceless diamond ; but that's all the same, you know. Then he stopped to take breath, and—I will be serious now, Gabrielle—I told him exactly what I thought of him and his behaviour : put both before him, in the darkest possible colours. After that, I felt rewarded. Never in my life, have I seen any one look more thoroughly ashamed !"

"Did you relent at all, then?"

"Relent? Most certainly not. What had he done to deserve relenting? So far

from that, I waxed in majesty ; and he made no attempt to justify himself only, at the end, had the audacity to ask if I could mention any means by which he might regain my favour ?”

“ Well ?”

“ Well ! I said ‘ Yes. ’ ”

“ ‘ Yes,’ Cissy ?”

“ ‘ Yes,’ my cousin. Whereat he caught ; and begged me, whatever it was, to mention it directly. So I told him he could regain my favour, by regaining, if that were possible—which, judging from my own feelings, I should fear not—the favour of Miss Ward ! ”

“ This was the climax. Oh, Gabrielle ! How I did wish that you could have seen the stately manner in which I sailed past him, and back to the saloon ! ”

Mr. Trevor left Farnley, the next day ; and a year later, Gabrielle read the follow-

ing notice in the supplement sheet of the
Times :

"On the —th instant, at St. George's, Hanover Square, by the Honourable and Reverend John Ward, cousin of the bride, assisted by the Reverend Henry Trevor, brother of the bridegroom, George Trevor, Esq., barrister-at-law, to Lucy, eldest daughter of Maurice Ward, Esq."

CHAPTER VI.

Be strong to hope, oh Heart !

Though day is bright,
The stars can only shine

★ In the dark night.

Be strong, oh Heart of mine,
Look towards the light !

Be strong to bear, oh Heart !

Nothing is vain :
Strive not, for life is care,
And God sends pain ;
Heaven is above, and there
Rest will remain !

ADELAIDE ANNE PROCTER.

GABRIELLE had long ago promised to spend, in the course of the autumn, a fortnight with the Barbers, at Eversfield. Mrs. Barber now wrote to urge this promise, and to beg that she would come to

them at once, naming a day: which happened to be the day following that fixed by Charlie Godfrey for the termination of his visit to Farnley. Olivia observed to Lady Peers that the invitation had come in the very nick of time. The change was so exactly what the dear child required, and would especially require just then! To which Lady Peers, who had all her life been an echo of Olivia, agreed. So it was settled that Gabrielle should go; and she wrote to announce her train: hardly knowing whether she were glad or sorry.

“And this is really your last evening, Charlie! How sorry I am to think that you are going away!”

“Yes, I am sorry too. But I shall be coming to Meddiscombe, in a few weeks, to read with Hawkins, and to get a little acquainted with the people, before my ordination. And then I shall, at least, be within

reach of you. That will be something."

"Yes, indeed it will. I wish the few weeks were gone. And I wish you could come with me to Eversfield. Think of me, at this time, the day after to-morrow, Charlie. Let me see: it is nine o'clock; tea will be over. I shall be sitting in the chair of state, leaning my head against the crochet anti-macassar."

"No, you won't. The journey will knock you up, and Mrs. Barber will send you straight off to bed. And at this time, you'll be asleep, I hope: not lying awake, to worry yourself with morbid fancies."

"Am I morbid, Charlie?"

She spoke earnestly, as though she really wished to be informed upon the subject. And when Charlie answered, with a smile, that he thought she was,—a little: she begged him to tell her how to keep the morbidness from growing.

"I don't want to be morbid, indeed ; but I don't know how to help it. If you will give me a few rules, though, I'll try to obey them."

Her manner was so gentle, so humble: his heart went out to her in redoubled tenderness.

"Do you remember, years ago, reading Longfellow's 'Psalm of Life' with me? There was one line which we stopped to discuss ; it has haunted me ever since."

"I know," cried Gabrielle, brightening :

" 'Let the dead Past bury its dead !' "

"Now, Gabrielle, why can't you do that? Take it as one of your rules. No better cure for morbidness, I'm sure !"

"Perhaps so," she said, almost too low for Charlie to catch, although he bent his head: "But to talk, or write, of a cure, is one thing ; and to act upon it, is another. When the past has been happy, peaceful, good, and the present is—just the reverse,

how can one help going back in mind, and longing for the old days?"

"Gabrielle!" said Charlie, feeling as though he had already assumed something of his ministerial character: "Is it grateful to repine in the present, because God has blessed us in the past?"

"Not to repine," said Gabrielle. "But—" She paused.

"I'll tell you what, Gabrielle, you're too fond of sitting among the tombs, raking at old ashes. You'd be far happier, if you went out into the living world, and made the best of it!"

He was preaching no less to himself than to her. As he spoke, his own courage rose.

"We have each a cross to bear. I have mine, and you have yours. If we never, till now, felt much of their weight, let us be thankful for that. You know the old sentence we liked so much. 'Crosses are ladders—'"

“‘Towards Heaven.’”

“Yes. Well, don't be afraid to climb them, Gabrielle. And there's another thing. I've been a great deal with Mr. Morris, lately; the good that old fellow does one, is really wonderful! We were discussing this very subject—the troubles of life, and so forth; and he said—”

“Oh, I know his pet idea: that the world is a school.”

“Yes: not a new idea, either. But, somehow, he makes it new; I suppose, because he realizes it so clearly. It's easy enough to talk, as you said; and to believe, in a misty, unreal kind of way. But when you come to turn your faith to everyday use, 'tis a different matter. Judge him by conventionalities, and he's an uncouth specimen as ever lived; but look at him in the school sense, and he's high above us all. In the sixth form, I take it: and near the top.”

"But what were you going to tell me, Charlie?"

"Oh, by the by! He said, the other day, 'Fact is, our lessons wouldn't be half so difficult, if we sat still and learned them—instead of pushing aside the books, sulking and fidgetting, like naughty children. Then the rod has to come in. I thought I never heard a truer speech!'"

"No"—agreed Gabrielle, musing.

"Well, Gabrielle! Here are two rules for you; and, as to that, for me. Don't brood over the Past——Learn the lessons of the Present. Now I've lectured long enough. I'll stop. You must consider this my first extempore sermon."

"Thank you, dear Charlie. You have helped me so much."

And as she spoke, she smiled,—the first really hopeful smile which, throughout his visit, he had seen upon her face.

"What a happy thing that I've not betrayed myself to her!" he thought afterwards. "She would never have felt at home with me again! As it is I do believe that I may sometimes be able to help her—as she says—just a little."

Yes, he was truly shewing himself her true knight.

Olivia had fully expected that Charlie's visit would bring matters to a crisis. On the morning of his departure—having waited half an hour, for Gabrielle to recover the first agonies of the separation—she repaired to the school-room—where Gabrielle was sitting—under pretence of finding a book.

"How do you feel, dear, now?" she inquired, searching the shelves.

"She is as well as can be expected," said Cissy, in a sepulchral tone.

"Cissy! I did not see you!—By-the-by, I wonder if you would just go upstairs, and

fetch my small bunch of keys? You will find it, either in one of the looking-glass drawers, or in the work-table, or in a drawer of the black cabinet. You don't mind a journey, I know."

"Of course not, my dear, any more than I mind leaving the room to oblige a friend. I'll go; and I'll turn into a stoopid; and I'll look without seeing; and I'll forget what I'm sent for, and run down to ask, and, at the foot of the stairs, remember, and run up again. Anything to oblige you—or Gabrielle."

And away ran Cissy, in high glee.

"That's right," thought Olivia, breathing more freely. "She will tell me, now we are alone."

An expectant silence on Olivia's part. An absent silence on the part of Gabrielle. No result.

"You will miss Mr. Godfrey, dear child."

"Yes, I shall. Or at least, I should,

dreadfully, if I were not going to Eversfield."

"You enjoyed having him?"

"Oh, so much. It was so kind in you to ask him."

Another long pause. Then—

"Olivia."

"It is coming," thought Olivia.

"Well, dear?"

"Shall I take gingerbread or butter-scotch to the little Barbers? Or both?"

"Both; to please all tastes," said Olivia, in meek endurance. Could it be that, after all, nothing had happened? that Mr. Godfrey was gone without a sign? that Gabrielle was—where she was before? Poor child! Olivia hoped that she understood him; otherwise, this state of things must be sadly trying.

"When does Mr. Godfrey come to Meddiscombe?"

"Very soon, I am glad to say. Yes,

Olivia ; I think I'll take both : and some sugar-candy, too."

"This is only a blind," thought Olivia.

"He can't settle down in the rectory, just yet, I suppose?"

"Charlie? Oh no. Not till he becomes a priest."

"Ah, exactly. And, of course, before then, he would not dream of setting up an establishment of his own. It would scarcely be wise."

"No; he will live in lodgings," said Gabrielle, staring.

"Just so. And he will not be able to think of marrying, either, at present."

"I don't quite see that. There's nothing to prevent his thinking of it to-day, if he chooses! Meddiscombe is a capital living; and he wouldn't mind a year's engagement."

"Ah! but, my dear—" interposed the consolatory Olivia—"You cannot conceive

the delicacy which many young men feel about that sort of thing. Some, I believe, think it quite sinful to propose, until they can offer a home. And, although this, perhaps, is not exactly to the point, still—he might not wish to bind her.”

“Her! Whom?” exclaimed Gabrielle, now fairly roused.

“Oh . . . anyone for whom he might care. Or perhaps, he might wish her to see more of the world first, to know more people. Or——”

“You seem very much interested in this wife of Charlie’s?” said Gabrielle, laughing, and looking, with some curiosity, at Olivia: “Have you anyone in your eye?”

Before Olivia, struggling between truth and delicacy, could answer this embarrassing question, a rattle of keys was heard; and Cissy reappeared.

“Well, Olivia! Have I been long enough?

I pulled out, and put in, every drawer : three times at least. I rummaged in the ottoman. I overturned your work-box—don't start ; I made it quite tidy again. I stopped in the passage to talk to Sarah ; and, in fact, I did my best. But is this the right bunch ? Because, if you like, I'll go again ; and be more stoopid still. You have only to speak, beloved sister, and I obey—as some one says in some novel."

"Give the keys to me, my dear Cissy ; and don't talk nonsense," was Olivia's sole response. Wherewith she departed ; leaving Cissy to perform a *pas seul* round the table.

James was in the hall. He looked pale and haggard : more like night than morning.

"Dear James, are you ill ? Have you got a head-ache ?" asked Olivia, anxiously.

"How you do harp upon health, Olivia !" he exclaimed, in an irritable tone.

Then, seeing that she was hurt, he laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Don't mind my bearishness; I'm not worth being minded—one way or the other. I want to speak to you. Can you come to my study?"

She assented, followed him to the study, and he shut the door.

He shut the door; and then he walked to the mantelpiece, and stood gazing into the fireless grate. Then went to the table, took up a book, glanced it over, and laid it down. Finally, he retired to a distant window, and there remained: looking out.

"Olivia, do you know whether anything has come of this visit of young Godfrey's?"

"Anything with respect to Gabrielle, you mean?"

"Anything with respect to Gabrielle. You fancied——"

"Yes. But I begin to feel puzzled. I

can't understand. He has not said anything to her. At least, I have been with her in the school-room alone; and I believe that, if he had, she would have told me: she is so very open, dear child.—Yes, certainly, she would have told me!”

“There is no doubt whatever of it, I am—afraid,” he was about to add: but paused. Was he afraid? Was this feeling at work within him, pain or pleasure?

“I begin to think, Olivia, that you have been on the wrong tack altogether; and that this is only a ‘brother and sister’ attachment, after all.”

“Well—it is possible,” Olivia sighingly admitted: “But I should be so sorry! Such a nice thing for her! No, James. I can't give up the notion, just yet. In another year, perhaps——”

“Oh, if you come to talk of years——” said James: and turned away. Years! Weeks

were years to him now ; days were months ; minutes were hours.

When Olivia was gone, he walked back to the mantelpiece, bowed his head upon it, and positively groaned. If, through his selfishness, Gabrielle suffered, she was bitterly avenged ! Even Cissy would have longed to comfort him, had she looked into his heart.

Charlie's departure was not the only one which took place on this day. The shy girls came to wish Gabrielle good-bye ; overwhelming her with thanks for her kindness, and with entreaties that she would write to them very often. Moreover, with lamentations, in that they were to be driven to Rotherbridge by Cousin James, and had no idea what to say to him on the road ! From Rotherbridge, James did not return until after dinner ; and then—greatly to Theodosia's surprise—he did not appear in the

drawing-room. At breakfast, on the ensuing morning, he was missing again. He had ridden out, Wilcox said, quite early: and had not yet returned. Where could he be, Olivia exclaimed. He must have forgotten that Gabrielle was going. He must have lost himself. He must have——Indeed, what must he not have done, according to Olivia!

The carriage was waiting; the luggage was strapped upon the roof; the horses were growing impatient. Olivia, for the twentieth time, declared that it was sadly provoking: James would be so sorry, when he came home. She would not allow the carriage to depart, until she had herself made a tour of all his indoor haunts. His bedroom, his study, the library, the chapel; each was searched: and each was tenantless.

“How unfortunate!” she said, reappearing with a disappointed countenance: “Have

you any message to leave for him, Gabrielle ? I suppose you would like me to wish him good-bye?"

"I have no message, thank you," said Gabrielle, evasively. She kissed Cissy once again ; once again promised Olivia to take great care of herself, and, above all, never to wet her feet. Then she stepped into the carriage ; Olivia's dignified maid stepped after her ; and the door was shut.

A momentary delay was still occasioned by Cissy's running to the window, with Gipsy, and trying—ineffectually—to make Gabrielle kiss him. Wilcox respectfully observed that it was ten o'clock, and that Jeffries had better drive quickly. In another second, she was being whirled away, through the park.

And no James,—no good-bye ! She was not to see him, she was not to speak to him, for a whole fortnight. And, in all proba-

bility, when she met him again, he would be Miss Featherstone's betrothed husband. For, in a few days, Miss Featherstone was to leave Farnley; and James would not let her go, Gabrielle was sure, without bringing matters to a conclusion.

It was a wretched drive to Rotherbridge, a wretched journey that followed. If only she could have taken all quietly, and in patience, it would have been so much easier, she knew, to bear. But now she felt so rebellious! "Why,"—cried a passionate voice in her heart—"Why might I not see him? Why might I not say good-bye? Why was even that poor little drop of solace denied me? It could not have done me any harm. I did so long for it: it would have helped to still this craving. I should have gone so much more peacefully! Oh, it is too hard. I cannot bear it."

"You must bear it," said another voice.
"And this is very wrong."

"I cannot bear it—I cannot," cried the first again. So, for hours, the conflict raged.

At length, a fellow-passenger, a lady of the Olivia stamp, inquired whether she were ill, and offered wine and a shawl; and Gabrielle, as she declined both, felt that, even among strangers, must her strict self-watch be maintained. She called her countenance to order, accepted *Punch* from a neighbouring gentleman; and tried to forget Farnley.

Still, as the day wore on, and they neared Brackdale, the Eversfield post-town, she could not but recall the time when she had seen it last; going over in her mind all that had happened since then, that had helped to change her, as, since then, she was changed, she knew. Then, somehow or other, though she had fully intended to trace out all the old landmarks, and had long been straining her eyes, in search of one particular spire, she contrived—she was so tired, so

worn—to fall asleep. And she dreamed that her troubles were over; that she was with James, at rest: only that rest was the grave. She was lying far down in the earth, she thought; but she could see what went on above. She saw the blue sky, and the white clouds drifting across it; and the daisies, and the grass on her own grave: and James keeping watch among them. His face was partly hidden, leaning upon his hand; the other hand rested on the grave, and Gabrielle felt its touch. She felt it through the sod, as though it rested on her own breast; and the feeling was peace. It was peace even to know that he was sitting there, so near; and the church bells were ringing dreamily; and her misery was forgotten, “as waters that pass away.”

“Brackd’le! Brackd’le!” shouted the railway men, and Gabrielle awoke. Her journey was ended; here was the old station:

and, in the distance, the old spire ; the inn, the bridge, the river ; all the same. Here, too, on the platform, was the well-known face of Mrs. Barber, vulgar, red, good-natured,—not changed a whit. Her bonnet was the very bonnet which she had worn the autumn before ; her gown, the “ best gown ” of the days when Gabrielle saw her last. The train stopped ; she hastened towards it, beaming with smiles.

“ Here you are, my dear ! This is a treat indeed ! ” And then and there, regardless of observers, she folded Gabrielle in her capacious embrace. “ Now, where’s your luggage ? Tom, my dear ! ”—as a sheepish boy advanced from the background : “ Tom, see to Gabrielle’s luggage. In the fore van. Two boxes and a bag. Come along, my love. Leave ’im to get it. We’ll go at once to the fly. Here it is ; and there’s your luggage ; all right, you see. No, Tom, you

ride outside. Well ! now, at last, we're off, and I shall 'ave time to look at you. And bless me, Gabrielle ! why did you not say that you were ill ? Here 'ave I been fixing all manner of plans, and not in a blessed one will you be able to engage."

"I am not ill,*indeed, Mrs. Barber ; only a little weak."

"But goodness gracious, child, what a cough you've got ! I hope they take care of you at Farnley, now ?" said Mrs. Barber, half resentfully.

"Oh yes ; too much, I think. Olivia is the best nurse in the world."

"So she is, to be sure. I recollect. I shall commence on my own score, now, though. You shall have jelly, and rum and milk, and everything good. That's what you want, I see ; and lor me, won't Mr. Barber scold, if I don't give it you ! Why, you're as thin as a whipping-post ; and your

cheeks are just like a pair of mealy potatoes!"

With which attractive description of Gabrielle's looks, Mrs. Barber relapsed into silence. She saw that the poor child's heart was too full for words, as, one by one, the old familiar places dawned upon her, and in the distance appeared the gray tower of Eversfield church.

"It seems just like coming home," she said to herself. At the moment, by the vivid force of imagination, coming home it really was to her! She had been on a visit; Mrs. Barber had volunteered to fetch her from Brackdale; her father, in the rectory garden, was listening for the sound of the wheels, ready to fold her in his arms, and to say how sadly he had missed her. But now they were rolling up the village street; and on the pavement, close by, she saw a clergyman, a stranger. "Our rector!" whispered Mrs. Barber. A young man, strong and ac-

tive: not the beloved form, that Gabrielle remembered,—a little bent, a little worn, a little feeble. Presently he disappeared down the familiar turning which led to the rectory. They, in the fly, passed it; and then Gabrielle realized that the Farnley life had been no mere visit, that this was no coming home.

Charlie's prophecy proved correct. Mrs. Barber, almost immediately after tea, ordered her young visitor to bed; and so thoroughly exhausted was she, that she felt thankful to obey. Drawing up the blind, and lying down with her face towards the window—whence, in dark outline, she could see the church tower and the rectory chimneys, rising among the trees: Gabrielle soon sank into the soundest slumber that she had known for weeks.

CHAPTER VII.

If the sense is hard
 To alien ears, I did not speak to these—
 No, not to thee, but to thyself in me:
 Hard is my doom and thine : thou knowest it all.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

IT was morning. Gabrielle opened her eyes, to find the sunbeams shining on the golden head of Mrs. Barber's youngest child, who stood beside the bed, and proffered a letter, directed to Miss Wynn.

"A letter for me? From Charlie, I suppose. Why——!"

She stopped short. That firm, clear handwriting, that seal, with the crest and the initials,—what was there in these to make her colour rise, her eyes glisten, her heart

beat so fast? The child lingered, moving to and fro, chattering about blackberries, and chickens, and new dolls; but Gabrielle heard not a syllable. She had torn open the envelope; she was drinking in the letter—as one who has long thirsted, might drink water, fresh and cold.

“Farnley, Sept. —th, 18—.

“MY DEAR GABRIELLE,—You will be surprised, I daresay, to hear from me: but I cannot rest until I have in some measure relieved my mind by writing these few lines. I am well aware that, during the past month, my conduct to you has been—or rather has seemed—little short of actual rudeness: wanting even in those common forms of courtesy which every lady has a right to expect from every gentleman. But it is not in my power to explain or to extenuate anything that has passed. I must resign myself, in-

expressibly painful though such resignation be, to the forfeiture of your esteem. The one hope left to me is the hope that you will believe me when I say, that reasons, which I regarded as weighty and powerful reasons, have seemed to render it absolutely necessary for me to avoid your society. I am expressing myself incoherently ; but, if you could see my mind, you would not wonder. To-morrow you go—I dare not trust myself to see you, or to wish you good-bye. You will know, on receiving this, how to interpret my absence. I shall not rest”—a second time that expression—“until I hear that you have forgiven my” (some word erased) “my rudeness of the last few weeks. The past is gone, and may not be undone. I can only implore your pardon.

“ Believe me ever,

“ Your affectionate cousin,

“ J. F. GORDON.”

"You mustn't get up to breakfast. Mamma says so," cried the child: "Do you hear? Do you hear? Do you want to get up?"

"I want nothing—except to be alone, darling."

"Well—I'll go and see about your breakfast, then. Mamma said that I might make your toast."

She danced out of the room; and Gabrielle was left to read each sentence over, until she knew all by heart. Then to lie still, clasping the letter in both hands, and thinking.

"It is his farewell," she repeated again and again. This, for the first few minutes, was her only idea. Afterwards, on considering more closely, she became aware of two facts. That James was overwhelmed with remorse: repenting, either his early attentions to her, or their sudden cessation,—which, she could not decide. That he

expected, and was evidently craving for, an answer to what he had written. Yes, she must write in return ; and how should she express herself ?

She must hide, with the utmost care, the true state of her mind. Whether or no his letter had been prompted by any suspicion on this score, she could not tell. But, since that was possible, she must do her best to obliterate such suspicion. Her note must be very calm, very indifferent ; friendly, yet not affectionate ; cool, yet not resentful. As to resentment, indeed, Gabrielle felt none. Some lurking sparks of it, she had, at one time, felt ; but this letter had extinguished them for ever. If he had made her miserable, he had made himself so. If he had spoilt her life, he had spoilt his own. Besides, there was certainly some mistake, some misunderstanding :—this thought was her chief consolation. She was sure

that he had not wilfully deceived her. She pitied him very much.

When she was dressed, she sat down, and wrote her answer. Finished, she read it over, tears blinding her eyes.

“Eversfield, September —th, 18—

“DEAR JAMES,

“Thank you for your letter. I am sorry if you have made yourself at all uneasy on my account. I had not observed any want of courtesy in your manner. Of course, when the house was full of people, you could not be expected to pay particular attention to me. You know best whether there be anything to forgive. If so, I do forgive you. I had a very unadventurous journey, and arrived here quite safely. Mrs. Barber met me at Brackdale.

“I remain,

“Your affectionate cousin,

“GABRIELLE WYNN.”

Yes, that would do ; it must do : although Gabrielle's whole soul revolted against its coldness, its stiffness—nay, its falseness. But she folded it, placed it in an envelope, directed and stamped it ; all quietly, calmly.

Then her task was done. She lay down again, and gave her sorrow vent.

This was what she must send to him—this formal, frigid string of sentences : when, had it been possible, she would have sent him only comfort—she would have said, “ Don't be sorry for me—don't be miserable about me. You did not mean to injure me ; or, if you did, never mind. Only be happy. Forget me, if it pain you to remember me. Blot out the past from your memory, and . . . be happy : that will console me best.”

Or, in her sore perplexity, taking another tone : “ What is it that has separated us so ? What is it that has come between us, to part us, loving one another ? What are

those 'weighty and powerful reasons?' Tell me; they will help me to endure. The idea of duty, of necessity, will give me strength. But this darkness—I cannot bear it."

Suddenly flashed upon her mind the question: "Ought he, if he love me, to marry *her*? He will do his duty by her, outwardly. He will keep his marriage vow in the letter. He will 'honour, and keep her'—'forsake all other' for her: but will he 'love her'—the first of all? And, if not, what is he going to do? To perjure himself in the sight of God, if not in the sight of man—to kneel before God's altar as a hypocrite—Oh, it is awful! I cannot think of it. And yet, if he marries her—and he does mean to marry her—it will be. And I cannot help it. I cannot save him. I would give my life to save him, but oh, I cannot—I cannot."

She could only fall on her knees, and commit him to God.

* * * * *

"Well, my dear, here you are! 'Ow do you feel, now you're up? I can't say much for your looks. Can you, Mr. Barber?"

"Hum," said Mr. Barber, glancing at Gabrielle, with a professional eye: "Looks are deceitful, ain't they, Miss Wynn? Let's feel your pulse."

Gabrielle extended her wrist: which he held for some time, after the usual pulse-feeling fashion. This done, he again said, "Hum:" a meditative "Hum."

"You've not been feeling very strong lately?"

"Not very."

"A slight cough, my wife said, I think."

"Yes."

"We must see if we can't fatten you up, a bit. No fasting allowed here, Mrs. Bar-

ber? The kitchen physic is your department, you know."

"Yes, I know, and I shall see to it, you may depend," replied Mrs. Barber, with compressed lips and a nod: "Bless me, Gabrielle! Upon my word! 'Ow like you're getting to your mother!"

"Am I? But she was so pretty, I thought," said Gabrielle, in all simplicity.

"Yes—I don't mean that you come up to her. Though you're by no means bad-looking, my love, yourself. But it's a look, just a look, which has come over you: and lor' me, Mr. Barber! how strong it is!"

She shook her head as she spoke, and darted a quick glance at her husband. His countenance, however—doctor like—was utterly impenetrable.

"I'll look at Miss Wynn again, if she'll allow me, and question her a little more closely. Just now, I must be off. Plenty

of time for all ! We shan't let her go in a hurry, now we've got her ; shall we, Mrs. Barber ?—My dear——?”

He beckoned to his wife ; who followed him from the room : and Gabrielle heard them whispering on the other side of the door. Mrs. Barber shortly returned alone, with a glass of wine and a biscuit. These she placed before Gabrielle, and sat down, in solemn silence, to her work.

“’Ow long have you been in this delicate state, my dear ?” she inquired, presently.

“Am I in a delicate state ? I did not know it. A cough always makes me weak. Never mind it, now. I want you to tell me all the changes in Eversfield—past, present, and future. So please begin.”

Mrs. Barber, never averse to a gossip, did begin. And not only had she plenty to tell, but plenty also to ask. She displayed an inexhaustible interest in the Farnley *ménage*:

making minute inquiries as to the number of servants, their wages, the "style of living," the amount of "company kept;" and, last not least, as to the personal habits of every one of the Gordons.

"I was mentioning you, Gabrielle, to our rector, one day, and he seemed to have heard great things of your cousin James. He said that he had written an exceedingly clever book. I suppose you know all about it?"

"Oh yes."

She went off into a dream, over the "Four Essays," and the evening when she saw it first, and her talk with James. Then passed to the lecture, and Mr. Savill, and her little congratulatory burst—and thought how he had pressed her hand, and had said, "Thank you, Gabrielle,"—and how his tone had thrilled through her——

"Good gracious me, my dear Gabrielle!

'Ow h'absent you are! When do you mean to answer?"

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Barber. Were you speaking? I am very rude."

"Oh no, my love. I know you and your ways, or ought to! I merely asked: Was Mr. Gordon engaged?"

"No, he is not," replied Gabrielle, in a tone meant to discourage further questioning.

But Mrs. Barber did not understand tones.

"Lor me! You don't say so. What a catch! And so 'andsome too! I saw him, when he came to your poor father's funeral, and I shall never forget him, I'm sure. Mrs. Simpson saw him too, and she and me have often said what a splendid-looking fellow he was. Such eyes! and such a presence! And such a nose! Goodness gracious, Gabrielle! if I had been you, I should have

fallen in love, long ago, with that nose."

"Should you?" said Gabrielle, smiling faintly.

"I'm certain of it. But you are the most unsusceptible little mortal! You always were; and all the better for you—living in the 'ouse with that good-looking young man. Bless me! And then he's so tall, too. I do like 'ight in a man. Nothing like 'ight, say I, for giving an air. Why, he must be—how tall, Gabrielle?"

"He is six feet three, I believe," said Gabrielle. She rose as she spoke.

"I think, if you would excuse me a little while, I should like to go, quite alone, to the churchyard, and see——" Tears choked her words; and Mrs. Barber was all sympathy and warmth in a moment.

"Go, my dear, by all means," she said, her manner completely changed: "This is the best time you could choose. The peo-

ple will be at their dinners, and you'll meet no one. Stay ; let me fetch your things."

But this offer Gabrielle declined. She had left her note to James in her room ; and she dared not trust it to the common letter-box, which stood on the hall-table, and which was emptied, every evening, by Mrs. Barber herself. She passed out at the back door, the shortest way to the churchyard. A pillar-post stood near. She looked cautiously round ; then, seeing no one, dropped her letter into the hole. After that, she breathed more freely.

"It is over," she said to herself : "It may be cold, or false, or heartless. I cannot alter it now."

She entered the churchyard through a side gate. At a little distance—the trees meeting over it, as of yore—was the gate used by the rectory household, Sunday after Sunday, for generations. Close beside it,

stood the rectory itself—the northern windows looking down upon the graves. And here the old church reared its gray walls, a tuft of moss studding them, in places—a swallow's nest or two, in the belfry window: all just as she remembered. There was no change: save in the human lives whose home those scenes had been.

On the south side, in the shadow of the vestry door, she found that which she sought. A still green grave, with a marble headstone; bearing the name of Gabrielle, the beloved wife of Robert Wynn, rector of that parish: who died June 18th, 18—, aged twenty-three years: also of the said Robert Wynn, who died November 20th, 18—, aged fifty-four years.

A rook was cawing overhead. The autumnal breeze was stirring in the leaves of the old elms. Beyond this, all was silence. The dead slept quietly. No movement, no

voice, betokened that, beneath those crowded mounds, lay forms which had walked the earth, as men and women. Gabrielle knelt upon the turf, rested her head against the marble tombstone : and pondered.

"The fashion of this world passeth away," she read on a neighbouring monument.

"Passeth away." It was all a pageant, then. Not her father's life only ; not only the lives of those who slumbered around him : but also her own life. She must go as they had gone. Her loves, her sorrows, her hopes, her fears, her wishes, must one day be as theirs.

Yes ; it was all a pageant. But a pageant with a celestial meaning. This thought shone suddenly on her soul, like a ray from Heaven. A story, written as we write for children, to teach and to exemplify. An alphabet—the key to higher study. A

book of emblems. The tears burst forth again; but they were tears of peace. God was sending to her comfort. For the moment, she saw this world as nothing, and its joys as nothing, and its griefs as nothing; and beyond, she caught a glimpse of the eternal world—of a home incorruptible.

Such inspirations do dawn, sometimes, from the depths of a great sorrow. They fade too soon: but their memory remains, a holy influence evermore.

CHAPTER VIII.

The current that with gentle murmur glides,
 Thou know'st, being stopp'd, impatiently doth rage ;
 But when his fair course is not hindered,
 He makes sweet music with the enamel'd stones—

.
 With willing sport, to the wild ocean.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

JAMES—although his acquaintances were legion—was not a man of many friends. In fact, he had, in all his life, formed only one great friendship : which had begun at Eton, and had been cemented by three years of continual intercourse at Trinity. George Raynton, the object of this friendship, was, when James first knew him, a clever, somewhat a cynical boy ; and he

afterwards grew up into a clever, somewhat cynical young man. He had always seconded, and had helped, in some degree, to form, the contemptuous opinions entertained by James, on the subject of love and matrimony. James did not, therefore, expect that, immediately upon leaving Cambridge, Raynton would fall in love himself, and marry—most imprudently—six weeks later. Such, however, proved to be the case. The bride was a girl fresh from school,—an empty-headed girl, vain and frivolous—a beauty, certainly, but no more. Raynton was set down by all his friends—James foremost—as infatuated!

And Raynton had made no such effort as James was at present making, to liberate himself from the snare. His opinions changed with his desires. He announced and, as he believed, justified, this circumstance to James, in a letter; the date whereof James indig-

nantly erased, and inscribed in its place, "Fool's Paradise." Moreover, since he would not hear of a long, or even of a moderate, engagement, he resigned the Trinity fellowship which he had just, to his pride and glory, gained; resigned likewise—not possessing the wherewithal for married life in England—all his home prospects, his old friends, his country: and emigrated to Australia. And this he did, not only with perfect indifference, but with perfect cheerfulness: simply because, as James, in scorn, soliloquized, he carried with him a woman—and a silly woman. James, officiated, superciliously, as best man at the wedding; and returned home doubly, trebly, fixed in his own stoical resolutions. Never—no, Never—would he shew himself such a fool!"

Since that period, three years had elapsed; and the friends had heard little of one

another. In fact, a coolness had arisen between them ; for Raynton was well aware of James's sentiments : to which, indeed, the recollection of days gone by, afforded him an easy key. But, early in this September, James had received from him a letter, written warmly, even affectionately, and announcing his return, with his wife and two children to England : thanks to a legacy which had fallen to them in the nick of time. He had bought a small property in Yorkshire, and it was probable that business connected with it would shortly take him into the neighbourhood of Rotherbridge : when he hoped to call upon James.—And it so happened, that on the very morning of Gabrielle's departure, some few hours later, Raynton appeared ; and remained at Farnley, until the following day. This meeting vividly revived in James's mind, old times—the times when he and Raynton, wandering, arm in arm, about their

Cambridge or Etonian haunts, had shared the feast of reason, and the flow of soul ; had drawn Utopian pictures of life ; had solved, to their mutual satisfaction, all the great social problems, and had interchanged opinions on every topic which they judged worthy of an opinion at all. Perhaps Raynton, like himself, would willingly have lived those times again. Much, at any rate, of their cordiality was now renewed ; and all differences were forgotten.

James, however, was not slow to perceive that a change had come over the young Benedict. Not the enervating, the effeminating change which James would have anticipated ; but one exactly its opposite. Raynton's face had always been characterized by a dash of cynicism ; it was now a cynical face. He sneered continually, moreover ; and his manner had a tinge of moroseness.

"Let me see, Gordon—" he said, as, his

visit ended, James was driving him to the station: "When and where did we meet last? Oh! at my wedding, I recollect. What a state I was in, by George! and what an awful ass you thought me!"

"I thought that you were awfully in love."

"Ay: a synonym. I have often recalled our old theories. We used to talk wonderful bosh! I suppose you have outgrown it all, by this time? Nothing like experience for clearing away cobwebs of that kind!"

"You have the advantage of me, there, remember," said James, a little stiffly.

"Well, that's true, certainly"—a sneer: "And then I'm a year or two the elder. However, your enlightenment will come—no fear!—if it hasn't come yet. Only wait till you fall in love, my good fellow."

"Once fall in love, and adieu to Reason. So it seems to me."

"Adieu to Reason for two months or so,

I grant you,—till you've been married two months or so. Not one moment longer. Why, man, 'tis an enchantment, such as we read of in the fairy tales. If it lasted, there would scarcely be a sane man in the nation. But, luckily, it don't last. No, Gordon ; my precept, founded on practice, is : if you fall in love, marry as soon as you can ; and you'll soon come to your senses."

"But what do you call coming to your senses?" said James : "The first heat passes off, no doubt ; but there's something deeper underneath : and, where that is of the right sort, it gets a hold of you, becomes a living principle. Then what is the result ? Two-thirds of the married men in England are absorbed in domestic interests. Their joys and their sorrows are shut up in a circle, comprized of a woman and a set of children ! How can we expect our nature to rise, how can we hope to do anything

great in the world, under such circumstances?"

"You forget that I am a married man myself," said Raynton, with a sardonic smile.

James hastened to apologize. He had, in fact, forgotten Raynton's identity. He had spoken as answering, striving to quell, a voice in his own breast.

"Never mind excuses: I'm not offended," said Raynton, still smiling: "I feel myself in no wise rebuked. I may be a married man; but I am not such a married man as you describe. Sometimes I almost wish I were!—I might be better off. What you say is very true, no doubt, in the majority of instances: but it never will, and never can, be true with respect to you or to me. We are not made of the gentle, plastic stuff that forms domestic characters."

"But don't you find that such continual intercourse with a woman's mind has a ten-

dency to weaken your own—to draw it down——”

“To her level? Thank goodness, I don't:” and Raynton laughed, loud and long: “My dear Gordon, this only shows how much, or how little, you know of a woman's mind! Are you afraid to trust yourself with your sister's children, lest you should catch their partiality for ninepins?”

“Come, come, Raynton! that's going a little too far,” interrupted James: some jealous care for Gabrielle flushing his cheek, and rendering his tone indignant.

“Well! you need not look so furious. Far be it from me to disparage ‘lovely woman!’ Women are angels, one and all; ‘we should be brutes without ye,’ is my unfeigned sentiment. But, to make a compromise with your literalness: Would your wife hesitate to trust herself with her children? If not, neither need you hesitate to trust

yourself with your wife. This, at any rate, is a just analogy."

He paused : sneering to himself.

"I'll tell you what it is, Gordon—before you're married. You go into society, and there the dear creatures are : dressed out and beautified. They sing sweetly, and they play enchantingly, and they dance elegantly ; and since they usually get themselves up in a smattering, at least, of the leading topics of the day, they contrive, many of them, to talk sensibly : or, anyhow, to evince a good deal of pretty curiosity. Then they are so agreeable, smile on you so amiably, are so flattered by your notice, that—to say nothing of their eyes, their noses, &c.—you feel quite captivated. You go home, and you think : 'Dear me ! what a fascinating thing a woman is !' Then you—you, *par excellence*—think further : 'This is an influence which I must resist. If I

resigned myself to it, it would absorb me, and shut out higher things. . I should soon be enthralled, degraded : ' and, accordingly, you avoid them henceforth.

" Now if, instead of argufying, and fighting against your nature, you obeyed it, like a sensible man, and took one of the sweet charmers home to be your everyday companion, you would soon find that it was a case of Much Ado about Nothing. Either your eyes grow accustomed to the glitter, or the glitter itself vanishes ; any way, it ceases to dazzle : and out she comes, her plain, unvarnished self. If, after this, you feel yourself in any danger from her influence, I'm sorry for you ! As to the affection, and so forth : that flows on (I suppose) imperceptibly. You go your way, and she goes hers. 'Tis a pleasant change, now and then, to meet—at meals, and that. And when you want amusement, there's her

chatter, always ready; when you want a shirt mended, she'll do it. On the whole, a wife is a convenient thing. So my advice to every young bachelor, is: Marry. If you expect a Paradise, you'll be disappointed; but no more so than you deserve, perhaps, for expecting Paradise in a woman,"—and Raynton sighed: "Besides, the disappointment will be gradual; so, Paradise or not, Marry. If you are sentimentally inclined, Marry: 'twill soon cure you. Above all, if you are highflown, despise love, and the like; Marry: you'll see the rights of it then."

James was silent. In these predictions—about the glitter fading, and so forth—there was something that strangely jarred upon his present tone of mind. He could not bear, in spite of all, to think that Gabrielle would ever appear to him less sweet, less attractive, less worthy of all love and reverence, than she appeared to him now. Was

he softened, or was Raynton hardened? He could not tell. He only knew that he shrank from Raynton's cynicisms, as from a shower of frozen water; with a feeling which, in others, he had always stigmatized as sickly and sentimental—a feeling of being misunderstood, thrown back upon himself.

Nevertheless, as, after Raynton's departure, he drove home, he found himself seriously pondering Raynton's experiences, and comparing them with his own. Raynton had been desperately in love; so was he. Raynton had cooled, had recovered his senses; so might he. The gratification, not the denial, of his desires, had effected Raynton's cure; might not the gratification, not the denial, of his desires, be, after all, the cure for him? To be sure, Mrs. Raynton was no Gabrielle; but James doubted whether this were anything to the point. He re-

membered that Raynton, at the time of his marriage, was as devoted to, as enthusiastic about, his wife, as though she had been the most angelic creature on earth : and he had further observed to James, that "superior women" were not in his line. Was it not the way of a fire to burn itself out, if unopposed ? whereas obstacles feed it like fuel. Might it not be as Raynton had said—that this passion of love was a temporary madness : something which must be gone through, more or less, by every man, and then put by for ever ?

And, on the other hand, this contest—what was it, but a prolongation of the madness ? This continual perturbation, this restless pain—could the peaceful effeminacy that he had dreaded, be more injurious to the mind ? The perturbation might certainly calm down, in time ; the pain might subside into a quiet heartache, wearing but

endurable : such as many a man, and many a woman, has to bear in secret, and work all the same, till death. But James was well aware that this result—never, under any circumstances, a happy result—could only be attained through long waiting. His nature was not of the kind which can admit twenty new loves in as many months, and be none the worse. It was not in him to forget, or to change. So far had he advanced in self-knowledge, as to perceive, that, continuing to struggle, the best years of his life would in that struggle be consumed. The best years of his life would be gone, before he could gain that calm height above the reach of passion, above the storms which sway, as so many reeds, the common herd of men ; whence he aspired to survey, and to pronounce upon, the events of the mighty Past ; and to turn them to account, for the benefit of the Present and the Future.

Had his conflicts, then, been altogether a mistake? Had the misery that he had brought upon himself, and perhaps upon Gabrielle, been wasted? His heart misgave him: he feared—he feared—it had!—Thus musing, he reached Farnley. As he entered the house, Theodosia Featherstone was crossing the hall to the drawing-room. He looked after her, with a heavy sigh. Here, raised by his own hand, was an impassable barrier to every hope of return. Even supposing that he broke through this barrier, Gabrielle would never, he was sure, condescend to accept him on such terms. Indeed, he would never so insult her as to ask it.

No; he must go on now: and face the worst.

On the following morning, Gabrielle's note arrived. When James unlocked the post-bag, her envelope was the first that came to light. He hastily thrust it into his

pocket ; for Cissy stood at his elbow : and, biting his lip in the effort to maintain his composure, went on to empty the bag, and to distribute its contents. Then—for Olivia was pouring out the tea, and The was speaking to him—he sat down in his place ; opened and read his other letters ; chatted, and was chatted to, as usual. Of eating he made only a feint ; but, somehow or other, he lived through breakfast. This done, he approached Olivia.

“ Olivia,” said he, “ I am going to Leeds. You had better not expect me till you see me.”

“ To Leeds !” exclaimed Cissy : “ Why ?”

“ I have business there,” replied James, shortly. Which, in so far as a small purchase—improvized to suit the occasion—could be called business, was true ; or—and this was more to the point, in so far as a business could be made of a restless desire

to get away, if only for a few hours, alone.

"Oh! do take me," cried Cissy: "I love Leeds. Dear, smoky, dirty, old place!"

"I can't take you to-day, I'm afraid, Cissy. I should not know what to do with you, and——"

"And you mean to go without me. You're an unsociable monster," said Cissy, turning away.

He made no attempt to excuse himself; departed forthwith—too thankful to escape on any terms; ordered his horse; and, during the brief delay which followed, took refuge in his study. He drew the little note from its hiding-place; his hand, that strong, able hand, positively trembled. He broke the seal, ran his eye over the contents; and his heart sank as low as, in all his troubles, it had sunk yet.

Well! what could he expect? he asked himself. Was it likely that she would

throw herself into his arms? that she would betray her feelings to him, the heartless, egotistical flirt? But did she feel anything? Ah! that was the point. Did she care, one way or the other?

Then his pride revolted. He wished that he had never written. He wished that he had let it alone. What a fool he had been! The hot blood mounted to the roots of his hair. He felt himself sorely humiliated.

But when, on the road to Rotherbridge, he thought the matter over, his sensations underwent a change. Gabrielle—that sweet ingenuous child, who had won him against his will—had ever been eager in interest, ready in sympathy, quick to express either. These cold, formal sentences, coming from her, must of necessity be forced. Had she felt nothing, she would certainly have said more. . . . For a moment, amid all his self-reproach, a flash of ineffable joy gleamed

on his soul. Could he but certainly know that she forgave him, that she would receive him, then——

He stopped short, remembering Miss Featherstone.

CHAPTER IX.

“What do I hear? Is this thy vow?”

Sir James the Ross replied :

“And will Matilda wed the Græme,
Though sworn to be my bride?”

MICHAEL BRUCE. *Old Ballad.*

IN walking aimlessly about the streets of Leeds—passing beauty without observation, squalor without disgust, beggary without disgust, beggary without attention: James passed the greater part of the day. At length, he became aware that he was tired—exceedingly tired. He paused, looked at his watch. It was past five o'clock; in less than an hour, his train would start. He

made the best of his way back to the station.

At the counter of the refreshment-room, stood a lanky gentleman, with red hair, and a red countenance, in no wise remarkable for wits. He was asking, as James entered—addressing the young lady in attendance—while his great-coat slided unperceived from over his arm :

“Can you tell me the next train to Rotherbridge?”

“What is the next train to Rotherbridge, Miss Andrews?” screeched the young lady.

She was answered by a corresponding screech from regions unknown.

“That’s the Rothridge train as is just gone ; and there’s not another to-night.”

“Rotherbridge,” the young lady screeched again. James came to the rescue : the more readily, since the lanky gentleman was none other than Lord Joseph Postlethwaite. On

seeing James, he looked stupid and aghast, eyed askance his offered hand ; finally, with evident reluctance, took it slowly, and shook it feebly. But not one syllable did he utter.

“The Rotherbridge train starts at six o'clock,” said James : “I am going by it myself.”

“Oh ! Ah !” replied Lord Joseph, his colour deepening : “Fact is—” and he appeared to make a tremendous effort—“Fact is, Gordon, you’re just exactly the fellow I wanted. I was on my way to Farnley. I have . . . I have something of importance to say to you.”

“Suppose we come out on the platform?” proposed James : perceiving that the young lady was attentively listening, with every symptom of unbounded interest.

“Well !” assented Lord Joseph : “Fact is—suppose we do.”

And to the platform they repaired : James having first stooped to pick up the great-coat, which, by this time, had reached the ground.

“ Why did you wish to see me ?” he inquired, as Lord Joseph remained silent and confused.

“ It isn't fair now, Gordon. 'Pon my word, it isn't.”

“ What isn't fair, Lord Joseph ?”

“ Oh, come ! You know,” said Lord Joseph.

“ Indeed I do not know,” said James, staring.

“ Everybody says so, you see ; or I shouldn't have objected. I don't mind a little flirting. But, you know, when it comes to that, you know, it is going a *leetle* too far. And everybody says so.”

“ Would you oblige me,” returned James,

"by informing me what it is that everybody says?"

"Well!" said Lord Joseph, stammering :
"Well! you know . . . fact is . . . I've heard from reliable quarters, that you're . . . that you're spoony . . . that you're making up to . . . that you and Miss . . . Miss . . ."

"Featherstone?" said James, helping him out.

"Ay—" intensely relieved—"You and Miss Featherstone. That you're talked of together, you know; that you're likely to . . . to . . . make a match of it, in fact. And that can't be right, you know—can it?—when she's engaged to . . . to . . ."

"To you?" again assisted James.

"There. You've guessed it. I haven't told you; now have I?" inquired Lord Joseph, with evident anxiety.

"No . . . no . . . you have not told me," replied James, hardly knowing what he said.

Lord Joseph again evinced himself intensely relieved.

"That's all right, then. She can't blame me. Awfully lucky! isn't it now? I should have been obliged to tell you, if you hadn't guessed. And then"—his voice sank—"she'd have been in an awful wax; might have thrown me over altogether. For I promised to say nothing about it, until she gave me leave."

"You did, did you?"

"Why, fact is, you know, I was awfully spoony. Glad to get her, you know, on any terms. And she said she couldn't possibly allow the engagement to be proclaimed at present. She said she'd consider herself bound, all the same, you know; and I might write to her, and all that. But she'd particular reasons, she said, why she wished it kept to ourselves for a month or so. Of course I didn't like it, you know; but, fact

is . . . I found that I must lump it ; and she begged so hard ; and . . . altogether . . . you understand."

James did understand. His eyes were opened to Miss Featherstone's little game. On the principle that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, she had accepted Lord Joseph—or rather, the title and the ducal connexion—while she could accept them. But, sensible at the same time, that Farnley and its riches were better worth, because more substantial, than any mere name, however glorious : and Lord Joseph, for his station, was poor :—she had kept the hand well closed, the bird well concealed, and had set off to the bush, full speed. Should she succeed there, the first capture might go free. Should she fail, that, at any rate, was her own.

James saw as he had never seen before, what manner of woman he would have

taken to his heart and his home. But it was impossible, as yet, to realize his escape. Everything seemed in a whirl.

"When did all this happen, if I may ask?" said he, as soon as he could speak.

"Why, in July, you know ; in town. She was going down to your place, she said, and—fact was, I thought it as well to make sure of her, before—before . . . You perceive?"

"Oh yes : I perceive," said James, contemptuously. "And now you were coming to take me to task for my presumption in having her at Farnley?"

"Well, fact is—no offence, you know ; but everybody did say so—I thought you were . . . you know what I mean, you know, and—and—as she did happen to be engaged to me——"

"But you see I could not tell by intuition that she was engaged to you."

"No. Exactly. You couldn't. Only

—only—you know how a fellow feels, Gordon, you know ; and I was thinking—” said Lord Joseph, fiery red—“ what an awfully good-looking chap you were, and—and—all that takes women so, and you might have anyone you chose ; and then to go and take advantage of it, you know, and get the one of all others, the only one I wanted—it did seem rather—rather—fact was, I felt . . . but never mind. There could be no real unfairness. I forgot, you know.”

Poor Lord Joseph ! It was a case of the little ewe lamb ; and he had been thoroughly frightened. Deep was his relief, to feel that the worst was over ; that Gordon was not offended ; that The was still his own ;—at least it appeared so.

“ I say, you know—you did flirt with her a little, I suppose ; but she didn’t—you haven’t—it hasn’t gone far enough to make her repent her engagement ?”

"If I might advise," said James, "it would be better to address that question to her."

"Exactly. Of course. So it would. Still—fact is—I daresay I shan't see her, just yet——"

"But won't you come on with me?"

"Thanks. Very kind, I'm sure," said Lord Joseph, overwhelmed: "Fact is—nothing can be kinder—but I think, you know, after telling you; I mean after talking to you: for I didn't tell you—now did I?"

"Well, no; you did not tell me, in so many words," was James's reassuring reply.

"No, I did not," echoed Lord Joseph: "But since, somehow or other, it has come out, you know, it might be as well for me to keep out of her way a little, you know."

A happy state of things, truly! However, James agreed that, perhaps—all considered—it might.

"Well, then, you'll tell me as a friend—you're an awfully good fellow, Gordon—you'll tell me as a friend: Do you think, now, that she's lost her heart to you?"

There was in this question and its attendant circumstances, something so ludicrous, that, despite the perturbation of James's mind, he found it exceedingly difficult to repress a smile.

"No," he said: "I do Not think that Miss Featherstone has lost her heart to me."

"Or to anyone," was his mental reservation.

"You don't, really, now? 'Pon your honour? And—it's a great deal to ask, but I should go back in peace, and you're such a monstrous good fellow—now that you know of this, you'll be careful? In fact, you won't flirt with her any more, will you?" said Lord Joseph, in an almost beseeching tone.

"It is not my custom to poach upon other

men's grounds," returned James, somewhat proudly: "That I have devoted myself rather particularly to Miss Featherstone of late, I do not deny. But, from this moment, she is nothing to me, or I to her, any more. Now, if you have said all that you wish to say, perhaps you will excuse me."

"I shall write to The, you know," said Lord Joseph, deeply grateful: "You'll tell her so, if you mention having met me? Tell her all about it, and how it was. You're an awfully good fellow. No offence?"

"None in the world," said James: shaking hands with a smile, interpreted by Lord Joseph as a further proof of awful goodness.

"Stop a minute," he said. He then fumbled in his pocket: dropping, in the process, innumerable things; and presently produced a cigar-case, which he extended towards James.

"Have a cigar," said he, in the fulness of

his heart : " Uncommon good ones. Now do have a cigar."

This token of amity closed the interview. Lord Joseph was perfectly satisfied. He retired without the station, to smoke and to chuckle.

And James ?

Afterwards, James found himself unable to remember where, at this time, he went, or what he did. He was conscious only of one great truth : which filled his heart ; which filled the whole world—so it seemed to him—with sudden glory.

He was free. Free from his self-imposed chains. Free to act as he would ; free to love as he would.

It was as though every power within his soul, arose and cried " Hallelujah !"

CHAPTER X.

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
 But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
 How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
 Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

.
 Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminatè—
 That Time will come and take my love away :
 This thought is as a death which cannot choose
 But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

THE had been, for several hours, in a humour reverse from agreeable: so said Cissy; so thought Olivia. She was, in fact, exceedingly displeased; with the world in general, and with James in particular. What business had he to go to Leeds yesterday, and to absent himself during the

greater part of to-day: leaving her alone? Alone, that was, to all intents and purposes; for the other visitors were gone: and Olivia and Marian and Cissy and Sir Philip and Lady Peers and their children, were but as so many nothings to The. In a very short time—less than a week—she would return to her mother. She wished, while still at Farnley, to enjoy the *éclat* of an engagement, publicly proclaimed, with Farnley's lord. She was impatient to avail herself of the opportunities that would then be afforded, for setting down Cissy, for condescending to Olivia, for outrivalling Marian; and, further, for looking round upon the place and its belongings with the complacency of one who, if not exactly their owner, was, at least, their owner's queen. "*Vainqueures des vainqueurs de la terre.*"

And thus The felt grievously provoked when Olivia observed, that James would

probably be absent the whole evening. She only brightened, when, towards ten o'clock, the opening and shutting of doors, steps as of an arrival, and finally James's own voice, announced his return. She smoothed her hair, adjusted her bracelets, drew herself up; and glanced at her beautiful reflection in an opposite mirror. Then, changing her seat for one at a greater distance from the rest of the world, she opened a photographic album, and was speedily, to all appearance, absorbed in its contents.

At length, after what seemed an interminable time, James entered. The thought that she had never seen him look more handsome, more radiant, than to-night. He passed her chair, somewhat to her surprise, and went on to the group beyond: where he remained during several minutes, answering Olivia's questions, and chatting with her and with the rest. The waited, bending

over the photographs. And presently—she was looking down, but she knew the moment when he began to move—presently he crossed the room, and seated himself upon an ottoman at her side. For one moment, The was contented. But when he spoke,—which he did immediately, without any preamble of eloquent silence—she almost started at the tone of his voice. It was so cold : so coldly polite !

“Miss Featherstone,” he said, “I have to congratulate you on a very pleasant piece of news, which I heard yesterday.”

Miss Featherstone’s blood ran cold. The drawback, the one drawback to her joyful anticipations, expanded beyond her utmost fears. The cloud, no longer a tiny cloud, loomed black and threatening before her. She smiled, however, and answered with composure :

“Oh, certainly. But I have no idea, all

the same, of what this piece of news may be."

"Indeed? Pray allow me to wish you every happiness in your engagement to Lord Joseph Postlethwaite."

The drawback had turned into a thunderbolt; the cloud had burst. Farnley was gone for ever. The felt herself completely taken aback. Her eyes sank; a guilty blush dyed her cheeks. James saw that his suspicions had in no degree transcended the truth. Never, on any mortal countenance, were shame and mortification more plainly blended.

But only for a second. Her presence of mind speedily revived. The blush still hot upon her face, she rallied her forces: resolved, since retreat she must, to retreat with dignity.

"Mr. Gordon, what do I hear? You have seen him? He has told you?"

"I met him at Leeds. He wished me to explain that he did not, in so many words, actually tell me," said James, his lip curling with a smile which The thoroughly understood: "To confess the truth, he was on his way here, but——"

"Oh yes! do, do let me know the whole truth. Hide nothing. Why did he not come?"

"He changed his mind," replied James, significantly, "after seeing me."

The asked no more questions. "Mr. Gordon," she said, in a confidential tone, accompanied by considerable play of the lovely eyes—"Mr. Gordon, I must request, as a personal favour, that you will not mention this affair to anybody, until I give you leave. I may tell *you*—so old a friend—that Joseph and I have been attached to one another all this year, and engaged since July."

"So he said," observed James, coolly. She felt that her confidences were repulsed.

"There were reasons—reasons too private to be revealed, even to you—which, much against my will, obliged me, for the first two months, to require secrecy. And even now, until I have had a personal interview with mamma, the engagement ought not to be proclaimed. Joseph was impetuous. He forgot himself. But I shall write and beg him to wait patiently, a few days longer. It can be only a few days. I rejoin mamma on Monday, you know."

"All right, then," said James: "Up to Monday, I will keep it a rigid secret. But mind! I promise no more. Monday over, I shall consider myself at liberty to speak and to delight Olivia: who always is delighted to hear of an engagement of any kind!"

"Of any kind, indeed!" thought Miss

Featherstone, furiously : but she kept her fury to herself, only too thankful to secure her point. It would be more than enough of a bad thing, should her engagement be proclaimed for the first time at Farnley. Once out of the house, she could afford to snap her fingers at the Gordons and their opinions ; but, in it, she felt a wholesome awe of the censorious eyes—perhaps speeches—even of that spiteful Cissy, that stupid Marian, and that dry Olivia.

“ I only trust,” she said, presently, “ that my interview with mamma may terminate well. If, after all, she should object——”

“ Oh, no fear of that, I should think,” said James, in a reassuring tone : “ What objection could there possibly be, you know ? Besides, she would overlook a thousand objections, where your happiness is so deeply concerned. And then consider : if Lord Darcy and Lord Henry were to die (Lord

Henry had a bad cold, when I saw him last) —and if Lord Darcy's boys died also, and the old Duke——”

“Oh, come!” exclaimed Miss Featherstone, peevishly: “Do you suppose that mamma is an idiot? As for me,” she added, growing pathetic—“I am thankful to say that my happiness is not dependent upon outward grandeur. Love is the true grandeur, after all;” and she sighed.

But in a corner of the bright dark eyes which met, with no adoring gaze, her blue ones, she detected a furtive twinkle. The mouth, too, seemed inclined to break into a smile; and not a complimentary smile. She thought it as well to rise, and, having repeated her adjurations of secrecy, to fly for refuge to Olivia and Marian.

Her spirits quickly rose to the emergency. The disappointment, though bitter, might have been more bitter; the “one bird,” at

least, was secure : and she returned a gracious note of pardon to the abject apologies which arrived by post, on the following morning. Her real sentiments, together with the righteous punishment which the unfortunate bird had incurred, were reserved until such time as Miss Theodosia Featherstone should become the Lady Joseph Pottlethwaite.

The engagement was a nine days' wonder : not only at Farnley, but whithersoever the breezes of gossip had wafted the story of the last few weeks. The Gordons were quite beset by visitors, kindly desirous to ascertain for themselves how that poor ill-used young man bore the blow ; and deep was the secret disappointment of many, when they found that he bore it uncommonly well. In more than one case, pity gave place to anger, and James was set down as an accomplished flirt.

But nobody was so much astonished as Olivia. Perfectly inexplicable ! she repeated, a hundred times a day ; to herself, to Marian, to Cissy. Perfectly inexplicable ! Her trust in James, however, remained unshaken. She was very severe on The ; but James was beyond suspicion. She did not know how it could be ; she did not understand ; but she felt sure that he had acted for the best—for what he thought the best. No ; Cissy had always been unjust to James. Cissy must hold her tongue.

Easier said than enforced. Cissy was exceedingly displeased that he should prosper so well, when he deserved to prosper so ill. “Now—” she thought to herself—“all will go smoothly. He will make up to Gabrielle, directly she comes home. Gabrielle, like a little fool, will be delighted, and will instantly accept him. Bells will ring, flags will fly, everything will come

right; and he will be very happy ever after. Whereas poor Mr. Godfrey, for whom nothing would be too good, must give up all; resign himself to his fate, and settle down, with no one to care about him, or comfort him, at that lonely Meddiscombe. Oh dear! oh dear! what a shame it is!"

And Cissy positively stamped.

A day or two after this soliloquy, James happened to enter the school-room; and seeing that Cissy was writing, and that an envelope addressed to "Miss Wynn," lay beside her on the table, he lingered,—taking the envelope in his hand, and toying with it absently.

"Well!" said Cissy, in a sharp tone: "What do you want? Please leave my envelope alone. I shall be ashamed to send it, if you crumple it like that; and then I shall have the trouble of directing another."

"You are writing to Gabrielle, I suppose," said James.

"The address is before you, Mr. Hypo—James, I mean."

"She is coming back soon ; is she not?" He walked to the window, and looked out.

"On Tuesday, I believe. What of that?"

"‘What of that,’ Cissy! cantankerous child! Pray have I offended you in any way? Because, if I have, I beg most humbly to apologize."

"Oh dear no, thank you"—with supreme contempt: "Your goings on are no concern of mine, to offend or to please me. All I ask is, leave me alone, and let me finish my letter."

"What can you find to say, Cissy? You are beginning a second sheet ; and nothing in the world has happened since you wrote last."

"How do you know when I wrote last,

sir? Go off to your Plato, or whichever of the ancients best teaches the art of minding one's own business."

"No; I shall stay here, and suggest subjects," said James, establishing himself on the window-sill: "Have you enlightened her as to the progress of Marian's dresses?"

"No, I haven't. That's reserved for the postscript—the *bon mot*."

"Have you told her about Gipsy's hurting his tail?"

"Yes, I began with that; to let her know the worst at once. Oh, James! dear, or rather, worthless—James! do go; and leave me in peace."

"Oh, by-the-by, Cissy: there's this engagement. That really is a piece of news, now. You must tell her that."

"Oh-ho!" thought Cissy: "I knew there was something. How fortunate that I had not begun the story! I was just on the point

of it; and I should have had to scratch it out."

"No"—aloud: "I don't intend to tell her, now; and I have begged Olivia not to tell her either. I mean to meet her at the station, and have the fun of relating it, as we drive home."

"Can you bear to wait so long, Cissy? Five whole days, you know; rather more."

"James, if you bother so, you will drive me to my own room; and that would be most ungallant."

"But I really can't get over your wonderful patience."

"Can't you? Why? Is there anything so very surprising in the affair? If The Featherstone is engaged, are not girls engaged every day? Gabrielle's own parents were engaged once upon a time, I conclude; so she must know that such things as engagements exist. And why should she take a peculiar interest in this one?"

"Now for my part, I should think it more amusing to tell her at once. It would give her time to digest it; and talking it over afterwards, would be all the better fun."

"No doubt," said Cissy: "And she would be put out of her anxiety—wouldn't she?—the sooner: her anxiety about poor dear Lord Joseph, I mean; for she saw his devotion in the spring. And she would also have time to prepare for consequences; *alias*, the wedding: for of course we shall all be invited. And moreover, to make up her mind as regarded them: in other words, to decide whether she would go or not. But still, my dear James,—*have* I suddenly changed into a zebra, or anything odd of that kind, that you should stare at me so?—still, my dear James, on the whole, I think it advisable to defer this weighty intelligence, till we meet. Further, to retire to my own room, to finish my letter.

'Fare thee weel, my ain Jeames,
Mine *ears* pant to be free, Jeames,'

and your tongue, it seems, pants to talk ; so we shall never agree."

And away, with writing-case, envelope, and paper, swept Cissy : turning before she closed the door, to make a sweeping curtsey to James. He bit his lip in vexation, and wished that he had not lowered himself to speak to Cissy on the subject. But often, in his own opinion, did James lower himself now.

He had hit, however, as he believed, upon a happy expedient, whereby the desires of his heart and the desires of his mind, might at length be equally gratified. Marriage, he assured himself, would be to him, as to Raynton, a composing draught. In marrying Gabrielle—on which, if she would accept him, he was fully resolved : he should merely postpone, not resign, the final victory ; substituting treaty for war. In a

year's time, he might fairly expect to be his own man again; free to devote his whole heart and mind and soul and strength to the higher purposes to which they had long been dedicated: in other words—words that, had they occurred to him, might have suggested a few unpalatable truths—to the exclusive worship of Intellect, his god.

In a year's time. He would be systematic, and allot to himself one year: to date from the era of his engagement. One year, to be consecrated to her, and to her alone; one year to enjoy, to his heart's content, her society and her affection. Then, back, without a murmur, to that sterner but grander life, the life of his dreams. Love her, he always must. Protect her, he always would. But rest in her, be a Mark Antony to her: never.

Thus he determined; and then, throwing away the curb, freely resigned himself to

the throng of hopes and fears and wishes which had so long been kept in abeyance. In these days, he lived but in the longing to be once more with Gabrielle. He could settle to nothing. He could neither eat, nor sleep, nor read. It was worse than longing: it was hunger; it was a consuming thirst. At last, the day of her arrival dawned. A few more hours, and he would stand, please God, in her presence.

They were all assembled at breakfast: he, Olivia, Marian, and Cissy. Sir Philip and Lady Peers were gone to pay a few visits in the neighbourhood; whence they would only return in time for Marian's wedding.

"The letters are late," observed Olivia.

"*'Parlez du soleil, et vous en verrez les rayons'*—a truly Parisian rendering of our vulgar old proverb!" said Cissy; as Wilcox entered, handing the bag to James.

"There are not many, this morning," said James, unlocking it: "Olivia, one—" he shot it across the table: "Marian, two—No, Cissy, none for you; and, what a marvel! only papers for me."

He threw the bag aside, and turned to Marian: who was calling upon him to decipher some almost illegible word in her letter. They bent over it together.

"Dear! dear! how very unfortunate! My poor Gabrielle!" suddenly exclaimed Olivia, from behind the urn. James stopped short in the middle of a sentence; and started as though he had been shot.

"What is the matter?" cried Cissy, really alarmed: for Olivia's countenance was portentous: "From whom is that letter?"

"From Mrs. Barber. My poor dear little Gabrielle!"

"Here: read it aloud or give it to me—one or the other," said James. Cissy

glanced at him ; he was almost colourless.

"I will read it," said Olivia, and began.

"Eversfield,

"Monday.

"MY DEAR MISS GORDON,

"I am sure that you will pardon the liberty I take in addressing you, when I affirm that it is for Gabrielle's sake. I will consequently waive apologies, and commence my tale forthwith. On her arrival here, both Mr. Barber and self were shocked by the delicacy of her appearance. She has subsequently been laid up with a cold on the chest : which, although it has now yielded to the remedies (mustard-plasters, &c.) applied, has left her more feeble than previous ; and the utmost care is required. You may not—since the connexion is on her lamented father's side—be aware, that nearly all her mother's family died of consumption, including the mother herself;

and Mr. Barber, who has known Gabrielle from a child, and who attended several of her relations in their progress to the tomb, regrets to observe in her more than one symptom similar to those which preceded their premature decay."

"Were you aware of this hereditary tendency, Olivia?" interrupted James, his voice half choked.

"Not in the least," said Olivia, flushed and dismayed: "Her mother died so long ago—and we heard nothing, that I remember, of the circumstances. But just let me finish."

"Mr. Barber has applied the stethoscope, and begs me to say that——"

At this juncture, Cissy, by some unlucky movement, contrived to overturn the cream-jug: the contents of which were pretty equally distributed between the carpet and her own dress. Olivia instantly jumped up,

and flew, with spoon and napkin, to arrest the dangerous stream. James also started to his feet, but from a different cause. The letter was crumpled in Olivia's hand. That ominous sentence was unfinished. What had Mr. Barber begged her to say? Death or Life?

"Olivia, leave that alone, and go on reading:" came the next moment, in a thundering voice.

Well might Olivia drop the napkin, and stare. Well might Marian stare likewise. But what cared James?

"Go on," he repeated.

Olivia, instinctively obedient, forsook the cream : and did go on.

—— "begs me to say that, although her lungs are in an exceedingly delicate state, there is, as yet, no disease."

"Thank God for that!" said James, hoarsely ; and strode from the room.

His sisters, in wondering consternation, heard him cross the hall, open the door, and go out.

"Why, one might think that he was in love with Gabrielle!" said Marian.

"So one almost might!" said Cissy, innocently.

But Olivia, perplexed and sad, said nothing. Her eyes were opened at last.

* * * * *

"Olivia, what can be done? You see, at the end of the letter, Mrs. Barber recommends care and vigilance and cod-liver oil, as if they were all to be mixed together:" and Cissy laughed spasmodically: "But I thought that there was seldom any hope for people in whom consumption is hereditary, when they get into a delicate state like this."

"Oh, Cissy! Yes; there is always hope: though, often, I fear, but little," said Olivia,

her cheeks wet with tears : “ However, all that we can do, we will do ; and we must try to be cheerful, and to make the very best of it to the dear child herself, when she comes.”

“ And she knows nothing : did you read the postscript ? Here it is. Olivia, listen. Such grand words, too ! ”

“ P.S.—Both my husband and self have made it a point to betray no alarm in Gabrielle’s presence. I believe the dear girl to be totally unaware of her critical condition : the more so, as she is ignorant of the consumptive tendency in her family. Her late lamented parent was very sensitive on the subject ; and took every precaution to guard her from the sad knowledge. She has been told that her mother’s illness was of a lingering kind ; but nothing more : and when the last survivor of her lamented uncles and aunts departed this life, she was

too young to understand the fell disease which destroyed them."

"Olivia, what was the last survivor? An uncle or an aunt, or what? I can't quite make out, from the letter."

"Cissy, this is no subject for ridicule."

"My dear Olivia! I'm far too good-natured to ridicule anyone. But seriously, I see in a vision, a slate, a corrected copy, a Johnson's Dictionary, and a 'Crabbe's Synonyms.' Here: take back the glorious result."

She tossed the letter into Olivia's lap; shook her finger in Olivia's reproachful face; ran away upstairs to her own room, locked the door: and cried as if her heart would break.

CHAPTER XI.

Lift up thankful eyes, my sweet !
Count equal, loss and gain ;
Because, as long as the world lasts,
Green leaves will come again.

DINA MULOCK.

GABRIELLE bade farewell to Eversfield, prepared, as she believed, for the worst ; but in a state of mind far different from that in which she had quitted Farnley. She had then been restless, passionate, rebellious,—chafing and fretting under the yoke of pain and disappointment which seemed appointed for her. She had felt her trial, then, to be greater than she could bear. She had almost felt it to be unjust.

But as she returned, these murmuring thoughts were stilled. She was no more hopeful ; but she was more resigned. The invisible world and all connected with it, were very real and present to her ; the visible world, and all connected with that, had decreased in her esteem. In fact, she had quite done with earth, she thought. She was contented—now—to serve out her apprenticeship, to work out her work, to the end ; and peace might come, in time. But joy she could not expect again, this side the grave. She must study the art of living without joy ; of waiting patiently for the best joy—the joy of Heaven.

Nevertheless, as the shrill whistle proclaimed the vicinity of Rotherbridge, her heart beat fast ; and faster still when the train steamed slowly into the station, and she caught a glimpse of the Farnley carriage, waiting in the street outside. The

august Wilcox himself stood on the platform; ready, the instant that the train stopped, to open the door. How Farnley-like, already, everything looked! The Eversfield world seemed a thousand miles away.

"We are to call at Bradley's, if you please, ma'am, to take up Miss Cicely."

Gabrielle's face brightened. This was a pleasant surprise; and so thoughtful and kind in Cissy! She would now be spared the trial of hearing, for the first time, all that there might be to hear, in the publicity of the family circle; from Olivia, or from Marian: together with the agony of self-command which such an ordeal would have involved. She leant back among the cushions, and endured her suspense, until Bradley's shop was reached. Then the carriage drew up; and Cissy appeared, radiant with smiles.

Beneath the smiles, however, Gabrielle detected a touch of unusual tenderness, of commiseration. Until this moment, she had not known how much of hope still lingered in her heart. But now even these poor remains vanished, and left a dead blank.

"I have quantities to tell you," said Cissy. "But I must wait till we get out of this worrying town. The clatter drowns my voice. By-the-by, Gabrielle, my dear, I hope you know to what a stupid party you are returning? An interesting quintett we shall be, till Marian's wedding."

"The wedding is very near now."

"Yes; the twenty-fifth is galloping on: or perhaps I ought to say sailing on, in compliment to the Admiral. And we are to have such a bustle! I suppose Marian thinks that, as she is making one splash, she had better make two (a very vulgar pun, Gabrielle!). So eighty people are coming

to the breakfast, and a grand dance, not to say a ball, is to follow in the evening. I hate the idea of the fuss; and so does Olivia. But Marian opines, that since weddings come but once a life—at least, we can't count on them oftener—she may as well do the thing handsomely."

"And where will they go afterwards?"

"To the Lakes for a fortnight. The Admiral wants to see what fresh water is like, I suppose. Then back to Farnley, a flying visit of three or four days. Then off to the dear Mediterranean: the only part which excites my envy."

Thus, clatter notwithstanding, went Cissy's tongue, until the town was passed. Then, when they had entered upon the still autumnal lanes, where the leaves were falling silently, and the bustle of the world seemed far removed; she drew nearer to Gabrielle, and hugged her tight.

"It is so nice to have you again, you dear, darling thing! I have missed you dreadfully. But before we talk about that, you must hear a grand piece of news. Can you guess it?"

A mist came before Gabrielle's eyes, a singing in her ears. She did not know how she answered; but she supposed, by another question: for, the next moment, Cissy was replying:

"No, it does not concern us: not, at least, directly. It concerns a young lady—some one whom we know very well."

"Some one whom you like, Cissy?"

"'Like,' my dear! 'Like' is not the word. Say Doat upon, rather. The news is a great blow to me; she might have done so much better. Though, as to that, it would be impossible, perhaps, to find a suitable match for her: peerless creature!"

"Oh! an engagement: I see now. But I

can't guess, Cissy. You must tell me. It is not yourself, of course?"

"And why 'of course,' pray? You alarm me, Gabrielle. I wish we were at home! I'd rush to my glass at once. It might be—nothing more probable—myself and Mr. Morris. However, it is not. It is The Featherstone and the illustrious Lord Joseph Postlethwaite; and they are to be made bone of each other's bone, and flesh of each other's flesh, on the twentieth of November, at St. George's, Hanover Square. No place less grand, of course, could do the thing properly. The preliminary steps were taken on Saturday, in the *Times*, in a paragraph headed, 'Marriages in High Life.' Would not The's eyes gloat over that! I wonder whether she sent it up herself!"

All this, and much more, equally sensible, Cissy said: in order that Gabrielle might

have time to compose herself and her ideas. At first, she grew so pale, that Cissy felt considerably frightened. But presently, and in double measure, the colour returned; and she asked with wonderful calmness,

“How did the engagement begin? Did Lord Joseph come to Farnley?”

Then Cissy, greatly to her own satisfaction, related all that she knew of the affair; and, moreover, went on, with certain pickings and cullings, to describe the scene which, that morning, had transpired at breakfast. This—in her own opinion, very cleverly—she contrived, without either denying or revealing the real purport of Mrs. Barber's letter. Mrs. Barber, she said, had written to report on Gabrielle's health; and had mentioned the stethoscopic examination. She then told the story of the interruption to the sentence which recorded its favourable result: and Gabrielle suspected nothing further.

Olivia and James—added Cissy, by way of finale—had been shut up half the morning, in private confab : whence Olivia had come beaming with significance.

Gabrielle heard to the end in silence. She sat silent still, when the tale was finished. Her hands clasped together, her eyes fixed and a little dilated, she looked and felt half stunned.

“It is a dream. It is a dream. I shall wake soon,” she was repeating, mechanically, in her thoughts.

“To tell you the truth—” said Cissy, after a long pause—“though I can’t pretend to penetrate his motives, I never did really believe in James’s devotion to The. He looked quite a different being, when he came down to breakfast, the morning after his expedition to Leeds. I did not know why, until The was gone, and he told us of her engagement : then I understood. There is

a good deal of mystery, as regards that, Gabrielle; but, as regards you, it is all very plain. And I can't resist one hint. This is a charming opportunity for a little wholesome discipline, not to say chastisement: which—next to inflicting the same myself—I shall esteem it my highest privilege to see inflicted. If you wish to prove your gratitude to me, for my good-natured communications, behold the means! I only wish I could step into your shoes, for one day—or even for one hour. I should not fail, I assure you, to get their very fullest value out of them.”

Gabrielle tried to laugh; but she could not speak. Her cousin saw it, and relapsed into silence. Ere long, they turned in at the Farnley gates. The park was in great beauty, just now; the autumnal tints had reached their height of loveliness: and at this particular moment, the rich glow of the

October sunset was investing all things with a radiance which seemed less of earth than of Heaven. Gabrielle gazed, and felt it to be a type of the glow which had burst upon her heart. One brief hour ago, her prospects had seemed to be blighted, like the leaves. But now, suddenly, even for this world, had light and life returned.

As the carriage stopped in front of the house, the hall-door was hurriedly opened. On the threshold appeared Olivia ; and, at her elbow, Marian. And Olivia looked so glad. Oh, what a happy coming home this was !—a coming home indeed.

“Here we are—all safe and sound !” cried Cissy, from the carriage window.

“Here you are !” was echoed from the steps ; and, a minute later, Gabrielle was in the hall, being kissed and welcomed.

“How tired you seem, my dear child ! you must come to my room and rest.” And to

Olivia's room accordingly, they all repaired. Gabrielle was installed in a great arm-chair ; and here she lay back, smiled, and answered questions : while the sisterhood sat and looked at her. She listened continually for James's footstep, nerving herself to meet him with due composure. But he did not come ; and at length Olivia declared that she could see it was too much—the dear child was so tired : she must go to her own bedroom, and lie down on her own sofa, quite alone.

There, by slow degrees, in the solitude and silence, Gabrielle realized that what she had heard, although most wonderful, most unexpected, was no dream ; that a turn in the tide of her affairs had come ; that God had blessed her—so said her heart—exceeding abundantly, above all that she had asked or thought.

* * * * *

The gong sounded. Cissy peeped into the room, and asked if Gabrielle were ready to go down. Quite ready, she answered, rising; fighting hard against an inclination to tremble. And as they turned an angle in the passage, a neighbouring door opened; she found herself face to face with James.

Both coloured; but Cissy was enchanted to see that James was by far the most confused of the two. He stammered, hesitated, shook hands nervously: and, in fact, his presence of mind appeared, for once, completely to desert him. Gabrielle, meanwhile, the blush excepted, betrayed no emotion of any kind. Into her always graceful manner, she now contrived to throw something of the calm, yet girlish dignity by which she had been characterized, among the visitors of a few weeks back. Cissy watched in admiration; but a sharp

pang shot through James's heart. Yet he thought that she had never seemed to him more loveable, more attractive, than she seemed to him now.

At the foot of the stairs, they were encountered by the ever-watchful, not to say tiresome, Olivia: who, struck by Gabrielle's weary looks, insisted that she should retire to the crimson sofa, and eat her dinner there. She obeyed; and James, in the dining-room, sat silent and moody, each course more tedious than the last. Olivia spoke to him, and he returned unmeaning answers. Cissy chattered, and he thought her a bore. Marian made gentle remarks, and he paid to them no attention whatever. While Gabrielle lay alone, as on the first evening of her first arrival at Farnley; lay dreaming, and hearing, as in a dream, the various sounds: the distant clatter of dishes, now and then; the hum of voices; occasional

bells; the spasmodic footsteps of the footman under the weight of the tray: Wilcox's more pompons tread; and, as a variation, the melancholy cooing of the wood pigeons outside the window.

Then—after what seemed an interminable time—the sisters leaving the dining-room; the rustle of Olivia's silk, the flutter of Cissy's muslin. And then Olivia looked in upon her, praised her for lying still, and told her that in half an hour she might come to the drawing-room, and talk as much as she chose.

It might have been ten minutes after this, that she heard a little knock at the door; said "Come in," all unconscious: and James entered.

James—and a sweet odour which carried her back to the spring and the bright days that she had spent in "the merry month of May." Then she saw that he had in his hand a bunch of violets. He walked straight up

to the sofa, and laid them on her lap.

"Are not those sweet?" he said, drawing forward a chair, and sitting down.

"Delicious"—replied Gabrielle, drinking in the scent: "They make one forget the time of year, though; and then remembrance is rather a shock. Thank you." She extended the bunch towards him.

"Won't you have them? I gathered them for you."

So she repeated her "Thank you;" and took them as he seemed to wish that they should be taken—as a little peace-offering.

An uncomfortable silence followed. Gabrielle smelled her violets; and James examined the books upon Olivia's table, opening first one, then another, and finally choosing a collection of engravings: the leaves of which he turned over, occasionally pausing to inspect some picture that he had seen at least fifty times before.

"Well, Gabrielle!" he said, at last: "And how have you enjoyed yourself?"

"The Barbers were very kind and pleasant."

A pause, and deep abstraction in a picture. Then:

"I got your note, Gabrielle."

"So I concluded," said Gabrielle, bending her head over the violets.

Another long pause.

"Cissy has told you, I suppose, about Miss Featherstone?"

"About her engagement? Yes.—I was surprized."

"We were all surprized. Only think. It was going on, all the time that she was here; and Lord Joseph was corresponding with her. If I had not met him, I . . . she . . . we should not have discovered it, until . . ."

He broke off abruptly; and glanced at

Gabrielle. But she was silent, not looking up.

"I never felt so thankful in my life," he went on, in a hurried manner: "That visit to Leeds was a true Godsend to me."

"Indeed?" said Gabrielle.

James detected a slight, a very slight, elevation of her eyebrows. He turned again to the engravings, and said no more. The incredulity, the coldness, both of tone and countenance, cut him to the quick. He remembered the time when she had seemed to confide in him as in an oracle; when her very looks had expressed the innocent reverence in which she held him. And now, what a change! Well!—he thought, bitterly—whom had he, save himself, to thank? Yet he had imagined himself a hero; he had shown himself ready to suffer anything, however painful,—to resist anything, however powerful,—which might impede his

heroic aims. How then was it that the result had been one so unworthy of a hero? That he had sunk, not in her eyes only, but also in his own?

He sighed heavily, forgetting her presence at the moment; and Gabrielle's tender heart was touched. She had felt herself compelled to be cool; but she had not meant to be unkind. However, she could not mend matters now.

"Did the Barbers think your singing improved by the lessons?"

"Mrs. Barber would not let me sing. She fancied that it was bad for my cough."

James winced perceptibly; and closed the book of engravings.

"You must take care of that cough, Gabrielle. This is a nasty time of the year to get one."

"Oh, but it is much better now, thank you," cried Gabrielle: speaking so eagerly

as to bring on a troublesome fit of it.

James watched her with a pained expression. She caught his eye : and resolved to end the interview.

“I should think I might go to the drawing-room,” she said, rising: “Olivia only told me to lie still for half an hour longer; and it must be over now.”

“She told you to lie still? And I have been talking to you!” said James, regretfully: “I wish I had known——”

“Oh, never mind,” said Gabrielle, just in the tone in which she might have told a casual acquaintance, that it was of no consequence, she assured him. Then she proceeded to the drawing-room; but James, behind her, turned off alone to his own study.

Presently the glorious tones of the chapel organ were heard, in the Kyrie Eleison of Mozart's Twelfth Mass. James had, in the

course of her organ lessons, told Gabrielle, that he often resorted to this Kyrie Eleison, when he felt disturbed in his mind—there was in it something, to him, so full of peace. Thus, hearing it now, in the distance, she understood. It was beginning for the third time, when Olivia insisted on sending her to bed.

She pitied him, of course. Nevertheless, as she lay down, her heart was full of joy. She did not attempt, at present, to explain the past, or to anticipate the future. It was enough, after all that she had suffered, to know that he did love her ; that there was no one now to come between them, or to usurp her place in his heart.

CHAPTER XII.

In the June twilight—in the lessening twilight—
My love cried from my bosom an exceeding bitter cry :
“Lord, wait a little longer, until my soul is stronger,—
Wait till Thou hast taught me to be content to die.”

DINA MULOCK.

DURING several days, Gabrielle continued, greatly to Cissy's delight, to answer James coolly, to look at him unconcernedly, to throw cold water upon his constant efforts to please her. James, however, at this time evinced himself to be of a truly persevering disposition. The first shock over, he rallied his forces, and applied himself, heart and soul, to the work of regaining what he had lost.

Every now and then, a frenzy of impatience came over him ; prompting him, follow what would, to end this suspense at once. But the thought of all that he might forego by such precipitancy, restrained him ; he calmed himself, and plodded on. His anxiety about her health, was a continual torment. Mrs. Barber's letter, the hereditary doom, weighed on his mind : he could not throw them off. The weather, just now, was unusually fine. It was one of those genial autumns which, but for the falling foliage, might delude us into the belief that spring, forestalling winter, had returned, to give us a pleasant surprise. Gabrielle, however, did not lose her cough. It grew no worse, perhaps ; but it grew no better : and no one could be long in her company, without perceiving that she was very weak.

James insisted on Olivia's writing to request a visit from a certain eminent

physician: specially eminent in his treatment of consumption. And although Olivia said, and the family doctor, with a suppressed smile, hinted, that, in so simple a case, it was scarcely necessary to send from Yorkshire to London for advice: James would take no denial. So Olivia did write; and the physician came: and his visit, for the first time, awakened in Gabrielle's mind a suspicion that she was more than commonly delicate. Olivia, afraid of alarming her, said nothing of the distance from which he had been summoned; but Gabrielle gathered it from some speech of his own, and was startled accordingly. And—now she thought of it—how long her cough did stay on!

“Oh, I hope I am not going to die,” she said to herself: “I could not bear to die!”

Where, then, was the calm indifference to this world and its concerns, which she had brought from Eversfield? Where the long-

ing after the higher world, which had, at the same time, possessed her? Where indeed? She looked at James; and her heart felt as though it would burst. How could she be resigned to leave a world where he was? Ah, she could not. It might be idolatry; but it was the truth; Heaven would scarcely be Heaven to her, she thought, without him.

“He will not separate us? We have been so happy,” was Charlotte Brontë’s dying cry, as her husband leant over her pillow. And thus, every year, cry many: wives, lovers, children, friends. These human ties entwine themselves so closely about our human hearts. Too often they blind our eyes to the Divine Love whence they came: the Love which is their Parent, Author of their existence: without which they could not be.

When her interview with Dr. W—— was

over ; when he had stethoscoped, tapped, and questioned, to his heart's content, and had bowed her out of the room, Gabrielle went quietly upstairs, and, falling on her knees at her bedside, prayed—as she had never prayed before—that she might live, and not die.

“ Olivia,” she said, some hours later, stealing as quietly into Olivia's room : “ Olivia, what does Dr. W—— think of me? Don't keep anything from me. I would rather hear the worst.”

“ My dear child !” said Olivia, smiling, and laying her tatting aside : “ Why should I keep anything from you? You have been frightening yourself, I see ; conjuring up all manner of terrible ideas. He thinks you very delicate, certainly ; and he says that you require a great deal of care. But that is all ; there is no disease. And he has prescribed a remedy which he believes will

make you quite well and strong again."

"What is the remedy?"

"I can't tell you now. But don't look so curious. You will hear soon: never fear. Meanwhile, dear child, remember: there is nothing whatever to be alarmed about."

Gabrielle was reassured; but the drawback, the drop of bitterness which, sooner or later, finds its way into every cup of earthly joy, had found its way into hers: that cup had lost its first unsullied sweetness. From this time, she began to relax in her coldness to James. The bare idea of losing him, of being snatched from him—perhaps in a few short months; and buried out of his sight: strengthened the intensity of her love, and inclined her to cling—as if that could save her—to his. So, gradually, she ceased to avoid him, and to repel him; and every day drew them nearer together.

These were bustling days for Farnley.

The preparations for Marian's wedding were fast drawing to a close. The *trousseau* was ready; and lady-friends continually came to feast their eyes upon it. They said they came to see Marian; but Cissy knew better. Cissy thought that the wisest plan would be, to hire the national schoolroom, distribute the *trousseau* on nails about the walls, and advertize admission at sixpence a head: children double price, on account of their propensity to finger. The profits might go to the Admiral, as a slight acknowledgment of his kindness in adopting Marian. Marian herself could walk round with a stick, and point out the best bits of lace. But Marian, even now, spent many a happy moment in ushering envious young ladies into the room where the chief treasures were enshrined. It was a continual puzzle to Gabrielle. She took a girlish pleasure in pretty dresses; but Marian's indefatigable zeal soared beyond

her comprehension. She watched and wondered; and felt her knowledge of human nature increasing.

So, at length, the wedding-day came. The grand event to which, during the principal part of her life, Marian had looked forward, was happily brought to pass: and Marian was married. It was a pretty wedding; and a sensible wedding: that is, the ceremony transpired without tears. And afterwards—saith the “Rotherbridge Mercury”—“the happy couple, and eighty distinguished guests, partook of an elegant *déjeuner* in the great hall of the mansion.” But when Marian, with her sisters and Gabrielle, retired to doff her bridal robes, and to don her travelling-dress, she began, for the first time, to cry, and to protest that she could never again, even with William, be so happy as she had been at home. Notwithstanding which, she had sufficient presence

of mind to be extremely careful lest her tears should fall upon the strings of her new bonnet; insomuch that Cissy, although in tears herself, could not help inquiring: "Shall I pin a handkerchief over the bows, dear?"—which Olivia, who was, as usual, enacting the part of a comforter, thought sadly unfeeling in Cissy. Then a message came from below, to the effect, that if Marian did not make haste, the train would be lost; and then there was a great hurry, and a snatching up of stray articles, and kissing, and good-byes, and more crying. Until James, tall and commanding, made his way through the press, and, taking forcible possession of Marian, bore her to the carriage. The Admiral jumped in after her; and thus, according to certain views, ended, for all intents and purposes, Marian's life.

"Oh, Gabrielle! here you are! Lying down like a good child. That's right," said

Cissy, entering Gabrielle's room, an hour later: "I came to ask you not to disturb Olivia just at present. She has shut herself up; and I am sure it is only fair that she should have time to cry out her cry, in peace."

"Yes, indeed. Dear Olivia! How good she is! She makes me feel quite hopeless."

"Oh! 'Quite Hopeless,' repeated Cissy, laughing: "And wherefore?"

"She is so unselfish. I look at her, and think how impossible it seems that I should ever be like her."

"To tell you the truth, I, for one, should never wish to be like her. All things—good as well as bad—have their limits; and, in my opinion, unselfishness may be carried to nonentityism. If we have egos, why not use them. My maxim is: Be natural. We are born with feelings; and the more that

we feel ourselves, the more we shall—or should—feel for our fellow-creatures. Moreover, it often does people good merely to see what others are going through; strengthens them and so forth. No, Gabrielle. Olivia's a dear old thing; and self-annihilation may be her mission. But it isn't mine; and it isn't yours: so we won't go out of our way to try for it."

"I should not succeed, if we did," said Gabrielle, a little wistfully: "But I have often thought that the spirit which actuated Olivia's life, is the spirit which has been at the root of everything high, or noble, or divine, ever done on earth."

"I wonder—" said Cissy, meditatively—"if that is the spirit I feel within me, now? I know I am about to victimize myself in a most barbaric degree: *i.e.*, to amuse those four horrid girls, our fellow-bridesmaids. Does that spirit make you wish the people

for whom you exercise it, at the bottom of the Red Sea : or, at least, the Pacific Ocean ? Because, if so, I've got it."

"Why are they horrid girls, Cissy?" said Gabrielle, laughing. "They seem very nice girls to me."

"Because you are so amiable. But I am thoroughly unamiable. And I hate all girls generally ; and these in particular,—because I'm obliged to amuse them. What shall I do with them, Gabrielle ? James and the other men are gone out ; and the clouds are too black for croquêt. There's bagatelle. Do you think they'd like a game of bagatelle ? Oh, dear !"

"Yes, that would be just the thing ; and I'll come too."

"No, you won't. You'll lie still and rest. Gabrielle, this must be the spirit :—I'd give the world to have you, and yet I make you stay here ! Sacrificing my own pleasure for

your good! It is the genuine article, and no mistake. Lie down, Gabrielle."

"I can't, Cissy. I can't lie down ~~any~~ longer. I feel too restless."

"Restless! What ~~about~~, pray? This state of things ~~must~~ be put an end to, or it ~~will put~~ an end to you. And so I shall let James know, in an anonymous epistle."

"James? Why James?" said Gabrielle, laughing and blushing: "I really must come down with you, Cissy. I'll sit in an arm-chair, if you like, instead of playing; but I must come."

"Well, that's a reasonable compromise. Take care, though, that you behave yourself pretty, before the girl with the big teeth: Janet Chamberlain. She's a rampant scribe, and will put us all in a letter. Indeed, I feel far from sure that she is not a reporter to some newspaper; and think what it would be to pick up a number by chance, and

light on a paragraph headed: 'Extraordinary occurrence at Farnley Park:' or 'Remarkable conduct of a Young Lady in Yorkshire!' Nobody knows. Writing women are my dread and abhorrence."

"There's not much to dread in this one, I fancy," said Gabrielle, as they ran downstairs.

But, in fact, at that very moment, could she have known it, the letter-box contained an envelope, directed to a particular friend of Miss Chamberlain's, and enclosing a minute account of the evident attachment between that handsome Mr. Gordon, and his cousin Miss Wynn. In which—watching its progress from afar—Miss Chamberlain felt unbounded interest.

The young ladies were soon assembled in the billiard-room: Cissy, as Mistress of the Ceremonies, reigning supreme. With imperious majesty, she took Gabrielle's arm,

and forced her down among the cushions of the arm-chair. Then, shaking her forefinger at her, she turned, with comical resignation, to the "four horrid girls."

"Well! now we'll choose sides; and we're an unequal number. My cousin is too much tired to play. Suppose I stay out, and mark, and place the balls?—Why, Mr. Morris!"

For Mr. Morris's head, and a portion of his right shoulder, had suddenly appeared at the door.

"Oh! Here!" said he: "Thought so. Yes."

"What's the matter?" cried Cissy: "What do you mean by profaning the sacred mysteries of this feminine assembly? I thought you had gone home long ago."

"So I had, Miss Cissy. But I'm come back. Want to speak to you."

The head and shoulder vanished, follow-

ed by Cissy. Janet Chamberlain looked after her with greedy eyes. Such incidents were to Janet's journal and correspondence, what "accidents" are to a sketch.

Presently the door was thrown open. Cissy reappeared; and with her, a young man. Whereat Janet's curiosity augmented; and she began to hope for a second romance. It was not towards Cissy, however, she saw, an instant later, that his attention was chiefly directed. As he entered, Gabrielle, flushed and joyful, started to her feet, exclaiming: "Charlie! Why, I thought that you were a hundred miles away!"—and he, regardless of observers, clasped her hand vehemently; asking how she was, in a tone so earnest as to impart a new significance to the commonplace words.

"Her brother, of course," thought Janet: "What delightful affection!"

She expected a fond embrace to ensue;

but in this she was disappointed. And the next moment, he addressed Cissy—Gabrielle's cousin—as “Miss Gordon.” He could not, then, be Gabrielle's brother. Janet felt sorely puzzled ; but the spice of mystery heightened her interest.

Gabrielle sat down again ; the young man sat down at her side ; Cissy returned to the bagatelle-board : and the game began. But Janet contrived to hear, and—within the limits of politeness—to see, all that was passing between the two—friends, or whatever they might be.

“How is it that you are come, Charlie ? I can hardly believe it, even yet.”

“Believe it ? Didn't you get my letter ?” said Charlie, picking up from the floor a piece of chalk, and proceeding to use it as a ball.

“Your letter last week ? Yes. But you say nothing——”

"Here. Just give it to me," he said smiling:—"Now what do you call this?"

He held the letter before her, pointing to the last page.

"I am going to Meddiscombe on Tuesday next; as, after all, Hawkins can't have me in December; and I would rather get my month's coaching now, than lose it altogether.—What do you call that, Gabrielle?" He continued his game of chalk, with a triumphant air.

"I overlooked that," said Gabrielle, colouring: "It is a postscript, you see; and I read the letter hurriedly."

In fact, she had read it at the breakfast-table, conscious, the while, that James's eyes were upon her.

"Well! never mind," said Charlie, smothering a sigh: "I was doubtful about coming to Farnley, this afternoon; afraid of being in the way. However, I thought I

would just walk over and see Mr. Morris; and he insisted on bringing me here. Gabrielle, how are you? Barber made me awfully anxious. I met him in London, and he said—”

At this juncture, Charlie was surprised to see how pale Gabrielle became, what anxiety filled her eyes; as, interrupting him, she cried—

“ Oh, what did he say ?”

The young man hesitated. He was hesitating still, when steps and voices were heard in the hall. The colour, more brilliant than before, rushed back to Gabrielle's cheeks; and James, with three or four other gentlemen, entered the billiard-room.

“ Raining cats and dogs, Cissy,” began James; and stopped short. Janet Chamberlain, whom nothing could escape, observed that his face clouded. He looked black, as she subsequently wrote in her

journal: and darted a sharp glance at Gabrielle.

"Why, Godfrey!" said he: "How d'you do? I had no idea that you were back in our part of the world."

"He did tell me," interposed Gabrielle, as if eager to show that there had been no concealment: "He did tell me in a letter; but I overlooked it."

"Oh," said James, shortly: "You are come to coach with Hawkins, I suppose, Godfrey?"

Charlie was about to reply: when Cissy, with a smile in which her brother detected no small amount of mischief, approached the little group.

"James, Mr. Lambert Waring has sprained his ankle, and can't come to-night. Won't you persuade Mr. Godfrey to fill his place? Olivia would be charmed, I'm sure. Unless—"—she turned to Charlie—"unless

you have given up dancing? You said that you should give it up when you were ordained."

"I am not ordained yet," said Charlie, smiling.

He paused, glancing at James: who, for once in his life, was guilty of a momentary solecism in good-breeding. While Cissy spoke, he had stood immovable and frigid, wishing that she were a boy: in which case he might presently have relieved his feelings by administering a salutary box on the ears. As it was, he was compelled to smother them; and further, to be polite. After a short struggle, he seconded the invitation, with so much show of cordiality, that Charlie—who had begun to fear that Gordon considered his appearance on this day, as an intrusion—was re-assured; and readily consented to supply the vacant place.

And now James, aware of Cissy's sharp eyes, and resolved that her ill-nature should not be gratified, insisted on sending a servant to Meddiscombe, to account for Charlie's non-return, and to bring back all necessary appliances for his toilet. He was almost thrown off his guard, however, the next moment. He saw Gabrielle smile at Charlie—a smile of unfeigned delight. What would not he—James—have given for a smile like that! He turned away, and devoted himself to Janet Chamberlain: who had drunk in the whole scene with avidity.

The entrance of the gentlemen had suspended the game of bagatelle; and it was now proposed to substitute billiards,—James suggesting pool, in which all might join.

“I don't know how to play,” said Janet.

“I shall be delighted to teach you,” said James.

"I couldn't think of giving you the trouble," said Janet.

"You couldn't give me a greater pleasure," said James.

"I'd rather look on, if you please," announced Cissy : and James knew that she spoke with a view to mischief. He made no remark, however ; but proceeded to initiate Janet into the mysteries of pool. And when next he looked up, Cissy had vanished ; likewise Charlie : likewise Gabrielle.

Now, for several moments, Janet found him as absent as he had previously been attentive. He stood, indeed, cue in hand, his eyes fixed upon the table ; but he allowed her to perpetrate a succession of villainous strokes, without so much as a word of remonstrance. Janet, however, was not offended. In fact, she was gratified. He was jealous ; it was just like a book !

Cissy returned, ere long : her eyes danc-

ing with malicious triumph. Again James felt that he would have given the world to turn her, if but for one second, into a boy.

"Well, Janet," she said, approaching; "How are you getting on? Have you pocketed many?"

"Not one. I am so stupid. Really, Mr. Gordon, it is mere waste of time to try to teach me."

"Practice makes perfect," quoted James. "I suppose Gabrielle is gone to lie down, Cissy? Miss Chamberlain, you don't hold your cue quite right. Here—allow me. Yes, that's just it. I suppose Gabrielle is lying down, Cissy?"

"No, she is not," said Cissy: "She is in the school-room, with Mr. Godfrey. She looked cold, and I established them by the fire, and there left them: so comfortable, that I found it no easy matter to tear myself

away. But third parties are always bores, in such cases ; therefore I made an effort."

- She spoke in too low a tone for any ear but her brother's. Janet, at a yard's distance, saw his face flash into sudden anger.

"Upon my word, Cissy, you had better take care! Coupling that young Godfrey's name with Gabrielle's—smuggling them off into rooms by themselves. It is very far from the right thing to do. People will think—"

"Mr. Gordon, can you tell me how to play this?" came in a hopeless voice from Janet.

James was obliged to go to the rescue ; and some little time elapsed before he could return. No sooner was he free, than he turned to look for the offender. He found her at his elbow : looking meekly up into his face.

"Well, James dear ! I am all attention. Go on. What will people think ?"

"Cissy," said James, sternly: "You are a great deal too flippant. I beg that you will be serious, for once, and listen to me. Gabrielle is a mere child in experience of the world; but you are—or should be—very different."

"Quite an old stager, in fact," said Cissy.

"And," pursued James, looking unutterable things, "you should know better than to lay her open to the unpleasantness which is sure, sooner or later, to result from these constant *têtes-à-têtes* with Godfrey. You are perfectly aware of what will be said——"

"I thought," observed Cissy, reflectively, her eyes fixed upon the opposite wall—"I thought philosophers never troubled themselves about what was said?"

"Gabrielle, at least," said James biting his lip, "is no philosopher. She is a girl; and a peculiarly sensitive girl. Any idiotic reports of—of that kind, would trouble her

far more than they would deserve. And such reports are certain to arise—quite certain—if this go on. However, Cissy, I have told you my mind: so now you know——”

“I knew it long ago,” said Cissy.

“And,” continued James, “I must add, that I never suspected you of such an entire want of feeling. However, that’s no concern of mine——”

“Well put,” said Cissy.

“——and after all, I believe, the wisest plan will be to speak to Olivia——”

“Or perhaps to Gabrielle herself?” suggested Cissy.

James reddened, and turned to Miss Chamberlain: whom he did not again desert until, at the dressing-bell, everyone departed, his or her several way: everyone save himself. He remained; leaning against the billiard-table, and hacking with a penknife at a small piece of wood; which he had

promised his little nephew, Johnny Peers, to convert into a boat.

“It is as I thought,” he muttered : “ Experience confirms my opinion : that to be in love, implies to be a fool, or worse than a fool. In what single respect have I, this afternoon, shewn myself superior to any vapid school-girl, with her head crammed full of petty jealousies and pettier spites? My peace of mind is at the mercy of the most trivial objects. I am no better than Annie’s baby there—which is for ever squalling, confound it !”—as the cries incidental to the transit from drawing-room to nursery, met his ear. He flung away the wood, pocketted his knife ; and, angry with all the world—himself chiefly—relieved his mind by rushing upstairs, three steps at a time, on his way to prepare for dinner.

CHAPTER XIII.

Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest, and youthful jollity.

.
Come, and trip it as you go
On the light fantastic toe.

JOHN MILTON.

THREE hours later, a considerable proportion of the beauty, rank, and wealth of the West Riding, was gathered together at Farnley. The doors which divided the ball-room from the saloon, were thrown open, producing the effect of one magnificent apartment: brilliantly lighted, and elaborately decorated with evergreens and flowers. An excellent band had been procured from York; fair forms and fairer

faces, set off by robes that might have graced Titania's court, floated to and fro: it was a world of music, of delicious perfume, of light, of beauty.

In early youth, such scenes seem to expand the soul; it spreads its wings and rejoices, as a butterfly in the sunshine. Few, perhaps, in the present assembly, had not already lived, or danced, away, this first unsullied gladness. But some—as, let us hope, in every assembly—had not: three or four very young girls, fresh from the school-room; three or four older ones, whom circumstances had prevented from mixing much in the gay world; and, it might be, one or two on whom Nature had bestowed the blessed gift of eternal youth—who still, despite their fading complexion, their sprinkling of gray hairs, saw “all things bright, with their own magic smile”—just as when they first came out, perhaps thirty years ago.

This latter number did not, of a certainty, include Mrs. Featherstone. But Mrs. Featherstone was present, her little sharp eyes roving, as usual, hither and thither. She also had been invited, and had accepted the invitation; but that very morning—so provoking! had been taken ill with a headache. She was *so* sorry, Mrs. Featherstone said. However, dear Olivia must excuse her.

Only two dances, and those, square ones, were permitted to Gabrielle. Olivia was horrified at the bare idea of more. But Gabrielle was quite contented, more than contented. The music, the large circle of valisers, the pretty faces, the general radiance, transported her with delight. Eye and ear equally entranced, she forgot that she was sitting apart; and felt as though she had been transported to some fairy palace, where all was brightness.

Thus, doubtless, in past years, had felt many another who, in this very ball-room, had joined in the minuets and country-dances of their period, with as much grace and spirit as was displayed in the quadrilles and galops of to-night. But that was long ago; their dancing day had long ago been over. No one thought of them now, or questioned where they might be; to what scenes the hopes, and loves, and longings—too strong to die—which they had borne into that ball-room, were transported. The feathers and gauzes, the lace stomachers and massive head-dresses—once the unconscious stimulants of so much vanity, envy, or anxiety: these remained, though hidden out of sight, in old chests and worm-eaten wardrobes. But their wearers, and they whose hearts their wearers had captivated: what of them?

“I remember,” said a very old lady, who had just made her way to a seat behind

Gabrielle: "I remember my mother's telling me that she was present, when a girl, at a monstrous grand ball, held in this room, at the coming of age of Robert Gordon: this boy's great-grandfather. He was uncommonly handsome, and as good a *parti*, as James is considered now: and his parents expected him to make a grand match. But, after all, he married his cousin, Miss Dacre: quite penniless, they said she was. My mother, who saw them together at this ball, and whose eyes were prodigiously sharp, predicted the marriage, when she came home; and my grandmother boxed her ears. My grandmother had set her heart upon him for my aunt, afterwards Lady Trevor: who died—let me see—sixty years ago, it must be now—at Rome. But at this time, she had just been presented; and, I believe, was vastly admired."

"But what of Robert Gordon and his

cousin?" inquired a girlish voice, beside the old lady. Gabrielle became all ears.

"Miss Dacre? She died, poor thing. It was very sad. She had always been delicate; and some thought the Yorkshire air too bleak for her. Anyway, she died—of consumption: before they had been married two years. He never got over it. To be sure, he married again, and had children. But he was never the same—never the same."

The old lady went off into a dream of reminiscences. It seemed to Gabrielle that a shadow had suddenly dimmed the splendour; that an undertone of sadness had come to mingle with the music.

"How long ago did all this happen, grand-mamma?"

The old lady pondered awhile: calculating on her fingers, recapitulating dates and landmarks of dates, in a murmuring voice.

"How long ago, my dear? About a hundred years—yes, a hundred years last May, it must have been, since the poor young creature died. And a hundred and three years since the ball, my dear: where my mother met her, and annoyed my grandmother by predicting—" etc., etc., etc.—the whole story over again.

"There are reports about this Mr. Gordon and his cousin," said the young girl's voice.

"Indeed?" cried the old lady: "Highty-tighty! I never saw her, did I?"

"No, grandmamma, never; neither did I: but I have heard a good deal of her lately. There are two stories: one, that Mr. Gordon has been jilted by Miss Featherstone, and is making up to his cousin from pique; and another, that he made up to Miss Featherstone from pique, and was in love with his cousin all the while."

"Miss Dacre was a beauty. Is this young lady a beauty, my dear?"

"I don't know, grandmamma. I should fancy not. But I want so much to see her!"

"To see whom, my dear Miss Fielding?" said a third—a bland, yet a venomous voice: "To see whom? I can point her out, I daresay, if you will tell me."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Featherstone:—" Miss Fielding hesitated, remembering The. The old lady, however, was less scrupulous.

"Yes, my dear; of course. Mrs. Featherstone can point her out.—Clara is anxious to have a peep at a certain Miss—Miss—what is it, my dear?—a cousin, and an *innamorata*, she says, of Mr. Gordon's."

"Oh! Miss Wynn! Good gracious! yes. Where is she? I saw her just now, walking across the room with Mr. Gordon himself, and flirting egregiously. Pretty, did you ask, Miss Fielding? Oh dear, no.

Quite the reverse. Plain, in fact. But you shall judge for yourself. Where is she?"

And Gabrielle felt that Mrs. Featherstone was looking out and about, far away, over her head.

"I don't see her at this moment; but she'll soon turn up, no doubt. As to the reports concerning her and Mr. Gordon, I can't pretend to say whether they be false or true. I am not so much interested in other people's affairs. However, everyone knows what pique is, and does; and . . . this in strict confidence, Lady Jane—" the voice became a hissing whisper—"to tell you the truth, poor dear The was obliged to . . . you perceive? . . . Poor fellow! most unfortunate, indeed. But it could not be helped. I assure you, I shall be quite thankful, for the young men's sake, when The is married. The havoc she has made, since she came out!"

"But does Miss Wynn flirt?" said Miss

Fielding, disappointed: "I heard that she was delightful."

"Oh, pray, my dear, don't imagine that I wish to insinuate one word to the contrary! Appearances are deceitful; and, for aught I know, she may be an angel upon earth. Just at present, perhaps, her head is a little bit turned. Only think what a match it would be for her! Not a farthing: and plain into the bargain. And Mr. Gordon—my dear Lady Jane, I do verily believe that, The excepted, Mr. Gordon might have anybody! Indeed, I can hardly believe he is seriously thinking of that insignificant girl. Young men will amuse themselves; but when you come to marriage——"

"Gabrielle," said Charlie's dear, good-natured voice; "Are you ready for the Lancers?"

Gabrielle jumped up: clinging thankfully to his arm.

"Oh yes ; do take me away, Charlie—to the other end of the room."

"Why, what's the matter? Are you sure that you ought to dance? You are trembling from head to foot!"

"Oh yes—I mean it is nothing. Let us go to the set out there."

Charlie, anxious and perplexed, obeyed ; and they began to dance : but her pleasure was gone. The fairy land was no more. She would have given worlds to run and hide herself. Every now and then, in the distance, she caught sight of Mrs. Featherstone, who was making a circuit of the room : a circuit interspersed with nods, and whispers, and beckonings, and taps of her fan. And poor Gabrielle's excited fancy pictured each of these gestures as relating in some way to herself ; and after each, she imagined that some fresh eye was upon her. Until the room appeared a sea of eyes, all

staring at her : and a sea of voices, calling her a flirt, or worse than a flirt. The Lancers seemed interminable. At length, to her relief, the last grand chain was achieved.

“Charlie,” she cried, hurriedly : “Please take me to that bench behind the door. I want to be quiet.”

Charlie, although distressed by her manner, took her at her word ; and she soon found herself half hidden in a corner. Another engagement compelled her squire, much against his will, to depart ; she was left alone, not only feeling, but looking, exceedingly wretched.

“Tired, Gabrielle ?” said James’s voice : and on the vacant half of the retired bench, James composedly sat down. She started, shrinking and blushing.

“No, thank you, I am not tired,” she answered ; and relapsed into silence : con-

scious that Mrs. Featherstone's sharp little eyes had discovered, from afar, her hiding-place.

"That woman knows how to stare!" observed James, watching Gabrielle, narrowly, the while.

"What woman?"

"Mrs. Featherstone. Those eyes of hers have been transfixing us for the last two minutes. She seems to find something remarkably interesting—or scandalizing; that's more to her taste—either in you or in me. Which is it?"

"I don't know; but her eyes are very terrible," said poor Gabrielle.

"Well! I can't say that they terrify me much. So far as I am concerned, she is welcome to stare all night."

"It is not for the staring that I care, but the talking; which is sure to follow."

"Let it follow. Does your comfort hang upon Mrs. Featherstone's opinion of your

dress, or of the flowers in your hair, or of your face even?"

"But, James—you know her notoriety for making up—or it might be more charitable to say, imagining—unpleasant incidents."

"And can she bring about, as well as talk about, the unpleasant incidents?"

"The people to whom she tells them, believe them."

"I am not so sure of that. Her little failing is pretty generally known. Still, if they did believe: what then?"

"What then? Why, James! who would willingly be abused, or even laughed at?"

"We should train ourselves to regard every species of falseness, as something beneath our notice: too contemptible to trouble us."

"But if even good kind people hear an untrue report, and condemn you?"

"Comfort yourself by thinking, 'They

only condemn me because they are deceived.' ”

“Do you think me very weak, James? Your manner is slightly condescending.”

He smiled.

“I beg your pardon. I was only thinking what a mistake it is to care for the opinion of any one, even of the best. For my part, I always say to myself, ‘Let them rave,’ or, ‘Let them praise.’ What does either matter to me?”

“Then do you mean to tell me, James, that you don’t mind, one way or the other, what anybody says of you?”

“I think I know only one person whose opinion is of material importance to me.”

“Ah! Mr. Savill.”

“No, not Mr. Savill. I do value his opinion, in a literary point of view. But simply because I rely upon his judgment, and believe that to be praised by him, im-

plies to be worthy of praise. The person to whom I refer—her opinion is worth all the world, Mr. Savill included, to me: *as* her opinion—nothing more. It might be true, or it might be false; but if I could only feel sure of its being favourable.”

“The galop is finished,” said Gabrielle, rising hurriedly: “Is not this our quadrille?”

They joined the ranks; and soon—she hardly knew how—her wretchedness was gone, her first delight was returning.

“Oh!” she exclaimed, at length: “How I do enjoy this! I’m sure dancing is an instinct of our nature!”

James smiled, and was about to reply, when, in the background, he distinctly heard Mrs. Featherstone’s voice observe:

“A genuine case of hook and line, Alfred. Is it not?”

James turned his head, and met the ven-

omous stare. Mrs. Featherstone, leaning upon her son's arm, had paused, close behind them : to watch the dancing. Gabrielle also looked round, somewhat dismayed ; but this last remark had been a dead letter to her. James, however, was less innocent. He avenged her by one of those slightly supercilious glances, which only those who have served an apprenticeship in the *beau monde*, can properly bestow. Then, with his usual equanimity, he turned again to Gabrielle.

This behaviour was quite too much for Mrs. Featherstone. She waited until Gabrielle had finished her crossings in the "Eté" ; and then, sidling nearer to the obnoxious pair, and lowering her voice :

" Ah ! poor foolish young man," she whispered : " The quiet flirts are the most dangerous, after all."

Once more Gabrielle looked round ; and

this time it was she who met the venomous stare; as Mrs. Featherstone, still supported by "Alfred," passed on to the saloon. Gabrielle longed to sink into the earth. James must have heard. He must also have understood. She dared not glance at him. She scarcely dared speak to him. Somehow or other, she contrived to get through the remaining figures; and the instant that they were over, said nervously:

"Thank you. I shall go to bed now. Good night, James."

But he offered his arm.

"Just one moment! I won't keep you long. I only want to show you the lamps in the conservatory."

"Please be as quick as you can," she entreated, still nervous, and exceedingly shamefaced.

"Why are you in such a hurry? It is not at all late."

He led her slowly along ; down the whole length of the ball-room, through the saloon.

“ Here we are, at last. What a progress it seems ! Now look at the lamps, Gabrielle. How do you like the effect ? ”

Gabrielle looked without seeing, and replied that she liked it very much. She was not sorry when James led her on : deeper in among the shrubs and flowers, further from the people and those eyes.

“ Would you like a white rose, in remembrance of to-night ? Your first great dance, you said.”

She stood and watched him, as he gathered, from far above her head, a spray with two spotless blossoms : blossoms lovelier than any that she had ever seen, until she came to Farnley. One of these he placed in her hand ; the other he retained.

“ Gabrielle, will you fasten this into my button-hole ? ”

"You'd do it better yourself, James. I have no pin."

He produced a small pin-cushion which Olivia had, that very day, presented to him.

"Here are plenty of pins. And"—his voice sank—"if you would not do it, I should not care for it to be done at all."

Gabrielle said nothing more. She drew off her glove, and placed the rose where he would have it. But her fingers trembled; a mist came before her eyes; and the pin refused to stick in.

"Why—you awkward child," he said; the words belied by the uncontrollable tenderness of the tone. He laid his hand upon hers, as though to calm its tremor; and afterwards, when the task was finished, he held it still, held it close and fast. She tried to withdraw it; but he raised it to his lips—impressed on it a long, passionate kiss.

"Never mind what a cantankerous old woman says," he whispered. "Don't let that, or anything else vex you—dearest."

"Good gracious! what a fine camellia!" exclaimed the old woman's very voice. Gabrielle sprang away from James, snatched up her rose, and literally flew. Past Mrs. Featherstone, and the terrible eyes—past "Alfred," who was close in his mother's rear—past the flowers—past everything: to the saloon. Then indeed, she slackened her pace; but only for a minute. The hall reached, she set off again, never stopping until she was safe in her own room.

She sank into her arm-chair, to rest and to dream. Oh, what was Mrs. Featherstone to her now? What was all the world to her? What, in all the world, had any power to hurt her? She still felt the blessed touch of those lips upon her hand; she still heard that tone, that "Dearest."

“Of all the ill-bred young men—” said Mrs. Featherstone, the following day—“Of all the ill-bred young men whom I had ever the misfortune to know, that Mr. Gordon, my dear The, reigns supreme! Really, the bare thought of his airs last night, makes me ill. If you could but have seen him look me over—or rather, through—his eyebrows just a hair’s breadth raised, in the most ridiculous way! And I positively caught him and that plain little cousin kissing each other’s hands. Yes; you may stare, The. It was so. *She* had the good sense to be ashamed; for she darted off like a shot. But he——! My dear, he did not even change colour: calmly took up her glove, which she had left; paused a second to brush a speck of dust from his coat; honoured me with the merest shadow of a bow; and passed on, as cool as a cucumber. Yes, my dear The. You have had a fortunate

escape. And I shall always, henceforth, affirm that Mr. Gordon is the worst bred, the very worst bred, young man, whom I had ever the misfortune to know !”

CHAPTER XIV.

I love you, loved you . . . loved you first and last,
And love you on for ever.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

“GABRIELLE, may I come in? Good child, to stay in bed so quietly!”

“Olivia sent Talbot, quite early, to say that I must not go down to breakfast.”

“She would send her again with a dose of nitre, if she could see how feverish you look! You have caught cold, you naughty, wicked girl. Dissipation doesn’t suit you at all. And, by-the-by, what were you about in the conservatory, last night? and why did you run off to bed without saying a word to anybody? There was quite a sensation, I assure you. First, Mr. Godfrey coming

up to me, and asking if I knew where you were; and then I looking round and about, and seeing Nothing—that I wanted; and then Olivia inquiring of whom I was in search, and I, darkly apprehensive, answering ‘Gabrielle;’ and Janet Chamberlain bustling up to say that you were gone with James into the conservatory: whither, a prey to sinister forebodings, I repaired, not knowing what terrific vision might await me. But still finding nothing, I returned to the ball-room, and sought oblivion in the giddy mazes of the dance. Then, suddenly, behold James alone! preoccupied, pale, and grave. Whereupon, confronting him with a Tell-me-the-worst-at-once countenance, I demanded to know—if he knew—the place of your concealment. He replied that he had not seen you for some time, but believed you to be gone to bed: which every day, or every night *dénouement*, was, to the

ear of romance, unpalatable, but to that of friendship, grateful in the extreme: and so ended my dismay, and—— Where did you get that splendiferous rose?" cried Cissy, with a sudden rush at a little flower-glass on Gabrielle's table.

"James gathered it for me."

"He did, did he? And its counterpart—I remember now—was in his own button-hole at supper. Humph.—There's the breakfast bell. What a pity it is that you can't come down, Gabrielle! You won't be able to wish him good-bye."

"Good-bye! Is he going away?"

"Yes, dear; he's going away. But not to New Zealand, quite, yet,—or to Highty-tighty—Hong Kong, I mean: you need not look so dismayed. He's only going to Rotherbridge, to the Petty Sessions; he'll be back to dinner. Good-bye. I must fly to refresh my inward woman."

And Cissy vanished ; returning a moment later, to put her head in at the door, and inquire :

“ Gabrielle, will you give me that white rose ? I’ve fallen in love with it.”

“ Then go to the conservatory, and get another.”

“ But I want this, dear. Do let me take it. *You* shall have another, if you like.”

“ Cissy, you will get no breakfast, unless you go down.”

“ And you no peace,” said Cissy, disappearing in earnest.

When Gabrielle, in her turn, descended, she found a comparatively desolate scene. The visitors were all gone ; Cissy was performing a solitary pirouette in the ball-room : and singing that she “ felt like one who treads alone, some banquet hall deserted,”—and not only felt like one, but was one.

“‘Sic transit gloria mundi,’ my dear Gabrielle!

‘Man is a vapour, full of woes,
He cuts a caper and down he goes.’

Vide the ball-room last night, and the ball-room to-day! Too melancholy to be borne, isn’t it? So come with me; and I’ll ensconce you, warm and cosy, by the fire in Olivia’s sanctum. You are to nurse your cold, she says. By-the-by, James was so sorry to hear that you had caught cold.”

“James! Did you tell him?”

“I told him that you were as hoarse as a raven, and your cough hoarser; and that it was all his fault, for taking you into the draughty conservatory. And only think! my majestic brother blushed—actually blushed: ‘celestial rosy red.’”

Gabrielle felt considerably relieved, when, after luncheon, Cissy, with Olivia, drove away to pay calls, and she was left alone.

A bright little fire blazed in Olivia's room ; and the crimson sofa was drawn up, as on that first evening, months ago, into the fire's vicinity. Upon this sofa, Gabrielle installed herself : a book in her hand. The house was unusually quiet. Baize doors and passages excluded all sounds that might be going on among the servants ; and for a considerable time, the silence was only broken by the occasional fall of a cinder, the ticking of the clock upon the mantelpiece, and the swaying of the trees, as the autumnal breeze swept over them.

Suddenly the hall door opened and shut ; some one had entered. She listened : there was a footstep—a man's footstep ; then Wilcox's solemn tone.

"The luncheon things are removed, sir. We did not expect you. Shall I——"

"I lunched at Rotherbridge," said James's voice : "Are the ladies out?"

"Miss Gordon and Miss Cicely are out, sir. Miss Wynn is in Miss Gordon's boudoir, sir."

"Tell Jeffries to look well to the roan horse, Wilcox. He seems out of sorts.—Thanks.—That will do."

She heard Wilcox's footsteps retreat; she heard James cross the hall—approach—pause for one instant, at the door. Then, with a scarcely perceptible hesitation, the lock turned, and he entered.

Their first simultaneous movement was to shake hands, and to wish one another good morning. Afterwards, James sat down upon a chair which was standing before the fire; and thus, during five minutes, at least, remained in perfect silence: his feet on the fender, his hands spread out over the blaze, his eyes looking into it. Gabrielle, meanwhile, her book open on her lap, trembled—she could hardly tell why. At length,

feeling that, come what might, this silence must be broken, she made a great effort, and spoke.

"You are at home very early, James. We thought that you were gone for the day."

A glowing coal had just dropped into the fender; James pushed it out of the fender, and under the grate, with his foot. Then he took the poker, and crushed out the flame, leaving the coal a cinder: and then he laid the poker down, and answered.

"To tell you the truth, Gabrielle, I came because I knew that the others would be out, and I wanted to speak to you alone."

She glanced at him, but said nothing; and another long pause ensued.

"I was sorry to hear that you had caught cold again. If you go on so, you will never lose your cough."

"My cough is much better," replied Gabrielle.

"But—" he continued, as if he had not heard, his eyes still fixed on the fire—"In our climate, at this time of year, colds are unavoidable. Did Olivia tell you what Dr. W—— had advized?"

"No. She promised that I should know before long, but she has not told me yet."

"He said"—James hesitated, and Gabrielle detected a faint, a very faint, tremor in his voice: "He said that your best chance—I mean, your best remedy—would be a winter abroad."

"Did he?" exclaimed Gabrielle, startled. In her inexperienced ears, those words—"a winter abroad"—sounded like a deathblow; or, at best, an amelioration of a deathblow.

"He said that you would probably return in the spring, as strong as, or stronger than, you have ever been. What do you think of this, Gabrielle? Should you like to try it?"

"I should like it, of course; but I don't

quite see how it would be possible."

"Why?" said James; and there was more than a faint tremor in his voice, now.

"I could not go alone," she answered, quietly; "And I don't know any one who could take me. You remember what the Northern Farmer says—'Gin I mun doy, I mun doy.'"

"Don't, Gabrielle"—cried James, hurriedly, putting his hand before his eyes.

"There is one way," he went on after a pause, resuming his first position—"There is one way in which you might go."

She looked at him, clasping her hands tightly together, in the struggle for composure.

"You might go," he said, gazing steadfastly into the fire—"you might go with me, as my wife."

Still Gabrielle looked at him, her eyes dilating, her cheeks and lips vying in white-

ness. She would, if she could, have spoken ; but her voice failed.

“ Will you ? ” said James, gently, leaving his seat, and standing before her. He tried to take her hand, but she shrank away.

“ I don't know— ” she said, nervously, the colour rushing back in a flood : “ I can't tell yet ; you must give me time.”

“ Perhaps,” said James, “ some explanation—I am aware that my conduct, lately—in short, my—my—attentions to Miss Featherstone— ”

He paused ; her agitation was subsiding : he saw that she wished him to go on. So he seated himself beside her, steadied his voice, and did go on : looking straight before him, as he spoke, with an incessant nervous movement of his signet ring.

“ Almost ever since I knew you,” he said, “ you have been to me what no other, man or woman, has been, or is, or could be. I was

not aware of this at first ; but I see it now. I have seen it for some time ; it has deepened, grown upon me. I have loved you—only God knows how I have loved you, and how I have struggled—But the struggle was fruitless. I am at length convinced that I could as soon, by force of effort, annihilate my soul, Gabrielle, as my love for you.”

“ Why—?” began Gabrielle: then stopped.

“ Why try to annihilate it, you mean ? I will explain. I think you know that, until very lately, I have regarded the state called ‘ in love ’ as an enervating and an enslaving state: tending to usurp authority over the intellect, and therefore dangerous. I have seen and despised it in others ; for myself, I believed that I was naturally of a cold, almost a stoical temperament, and thus not liable, or liable only in a very moderate degree, to its influences. I was consequently

off my guard. I mistook my growing interest, I may say, my delight, in you, and in all that concerned you, for a mere ordinary liking, and I made no attempt to resist the fascination which deepened every day. At last——”

James paused, and looked at Gabrielle.

“Do I tire you?” said he.

“No ; please go on.”

The agitation was all gone now. She sat calm, still, and pale ; listening, he could see, with intense earnestness.

“At last, circumstances occurred, which—in fact, I became suddenly aware of the truth.”

“Stop a minute. When was this ? Do you remember ?”

“Remember ? Could I forget ? It was in August. You were at Lorton, gone to meet your—your old friend, Godfrey.”

“Oh !” said Gabrielle : “It was then. I see.”

"What do you see?" he asked ; but she would not answer him. He dropped the subject, for the present : and went on.

"I searched deeply into my heart; I sifted the whole matter to the bottom : and I came to this conclusion :—that my love for you, if indulged, would absorb my nature to an effeminating, to an injurious extent. Therefore I decided that, cost me what it might, I would crush out this love : and, to this end, that I would make it a duty to forget you, a sin to think of you. I determined to marry another, one whom I should never be tempted to love too well : one also, whom I might feel sure that I should not injure or deceive, by asking her, with such motives, to be my wife. Miss Featherstone exactly answered to this description, and I believed that she would accept me. Not that she cares two straws about me :—but I could give her certain things that she does

care rather more than two straws about."

"And you would have married her without loving her?" said Gabrielle, looking him steadfastly in the face. "You would have made those solemn vows, before God, knowing that you could not keep them? James, it was wrong."

His eyes sank beneath hers. He felt—yes, positively, he felt abashed. This innocent, simple child had rebuked him; had put his philosophy to shame.

"James, it was wrong."

The words rang in his ears. Why had he never thought of this before?

"You see, Gabrielle, Miss Featherstone—or I much mistake her—is a young lady without a heart: a species of individual that one may look upon, in my opinion, as fair game."

"I spoke for your sake, not for hers," said Gabrielle: relapsing into her gentle, re-

tiring manner. "You seem to have been on the verge of perjury; her heartlessness could not alter that."

"Well!" he answered, a little stiffly: "I won't attempt to excuse myself. I am merely laying the facts before you. You must judge me as you like. You know the rest—the state of things which you found, when you returned from Lorton. What I was going through, however, in my secret mind"—his voice became half choked, and Gabrielle's tender heart went out in all its tenderness, towards him—"What I was going through, however, in my secret mind, the while, you cannot know—I cannot tell you; words would not express it. Thank God, it came to an end, at last; my bonds were broken: and I saw that it would be madness to struggle longer against that which had become a part of my life. How it might have been, if I had taken it in time,

I cannot say. But, as matters stand now, Gabrielle"—he rose from his seat—his tone deepened—his manner became agitated, impassioned; he did not think of the year to which he had pledged himself,—he thought of nothing, in this moment, save her: "As matters stand now, Gabrielle, sooner could my right hand forget her cunning, than my heart could forget you."

One minute Gabrielle sat entranced in the rapture of being thus addressed by him—her Admirable Crichton, her hero, her ideal. One minute: the next brought bewilderment, anxiety, doubt. These motives, these feelings—now all open before her—were so utterly different from any which, in her perplexity, she had imagined, had attributed to him. She must have time, she felt, to ponder, to understand them; and when, after a considerable pause, he ventured to say, "Now, Gabrielle, you know the truth. Will

you give me your answer?" she replied as before, speaking fast and nervously:

"I cannot just yet, James. This is all so strange; you must give me time."

He bit his lip.

"How much time do you want?" he asked, taking out his watch. "Don't leave me long in suspense: I can't stand it."

"May I have an hour?" said she, timidly.

"An hour. Well! I will leave you alone, then, and come back in one hour's time."

He turned, not trusting himself to look at her again; and, without another word, quitted the room.

"Master appears to be in a sad taking about something," remarked Wilcox, twenty minutes later, in the housekeeper's private sanctuary. He had been to replenish the study fire, and in one of the windows, had seen James—his head buried in his arms:—

neither looking up, nor moving, nor, to all appearance, perceiving the entrance of the butler. That worthy, who had never hitherto seen his master without all his wits about him, felt this circumstance to be highly distressing; as also did the housekeeper. But Talbot, Olivia's stately maid, was observed to smile, and further to nod three times, in a mysterious manner.

Meanwhile Gabrielle was deep in meditation. She wished only to do right; but she could not satisfy herself as to what was right, and what was wrong. James's confessions showed that his requirements were more extensive, his peculiar opinions more deeply rooted, than she had ever suspected. Could she, if she married him, make him happy? Could she retain his love? For Gabrielle was sensible enough to know, that love before, and love after, marriage, are somewhat different; and she saw that James was not

of a nature to be contented with mere fire-side joys, with the common interests of ordinary domestic life. When the first passion had faded, he would tire, she knew, of a wife who could give him nothing but these.

And Gabrielle distrusted herself. She feared that, on a closer acquaintance, he would find her insipid, dull: and would repent his choice.

"He ought to marry a genius," she thought: "A Sappho, or a Corinne. I am too far below him."

But suddenly—just as she had begun to fear that she had better give him up—the consciousness of her great love for him broke on her mind, with overwhelming force; and gave her courage. She was weak,—but her love was powerful; ignorant,—but her love was wise; of earth,—but her love was of Heaven. Then she saw that God, in sending this love, had sent, as

it were, an angel: who could not fail, under His blessing, to lead her right at last.

And she felt herself suddenly strong, for all things that might come upon her: strong for weal or for woe, for life or for death.

* * * * *

The hour was over. She had risen, mechanically, to attend to the fire: and, turning, saw James.

"Well, Gabrielle!" he said; and his voice was very low, very deep, a little tremulous, as before: "Well, Gabrielle! have you made up your mind?"

"Yes."

"And what is it?"

She glanced at him. He looked as though he were hanging, in an agony of suspense, upon her words.

"Is it Yes or No? I implore you to answer me."

"Yes," said Gabrielle, faintly.

There was a long pause. The sudden rush of joy, of certainty, seemed to stun him for the time. He could not speak, at first; he could only stand and gaze at her.

"You love me, then, Gabrielle?"

"Yes," she repeated, in the same low tone.

"You are not afraid to trust yourself to me, after all that I have told you?"

"No, I am not afraid."

As she spoke, she raised her eyes. They met his and he smiled upon her:—a sweet, a blessed, a divine smile, Gabrielle thought. Then, suddenly, she was in his arms; he was holding her close and fast; the pent-up love of months finding relief at length.

And Gabrielle did not resist him: for was she not his own? his until death—yes, and beyond death: his for ever and for ever!

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

